

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO CHOOSING A MEDIA TRAINING PROVIDER

INTRODUCTION

Finding the right media training is essential for your organisation.

Whether you are the head of comms in a large company, work in the comms team in the public sector, run your own company or work in a PR consultancy that helps clients get more exposure, you need someone who understands your needs and can help you make the most of the amazing opportunity media interviews present.

There are plenty of media trainers out there promising to polish your media performance – which shows how tricky working with the media can be.

But not all media training courses are created equally.

So, how do you go about selecting the right provider?

We've put together this guide to answer that question, help you make an informed decision and benefit from a course that creates real value for your organisation.

WHY DOES MEDIA TRAINING MATTTTER?

Before we get into the details of finding the right course, let's explore why media training matters.

It is something we could talk about all day – we've been delivering media training for 40 years and are passionate about the benefits.

But let's think about this question a little differently.

Imagine your public relations work has paid off, and journalists are looking for interviews.

But you or your spokespeople have not had recent media training.

Could you remain calm and composed when faced with difficult questions from a reporter and prepare concise answers?

Would you be able to stay focused and get your key messages and talking points across?

Could you create a natural-sounding conversation? Or would you sound like a corporate-speaking robot?

Sounds tough, doesn't it?

And that is why high-quality media training is crucial.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR THE ORGANISATION

There are many media training benefits.

Some are pretty obvious, while others can be well hidden.

Let's explore them in more detail.

Here are the key ways we believe media training helps your organisation:

Voice

Every company needs a voice.

Media training helps your company become part of the conversation now so that when you need to be heard, you already have an engaged audience that expects to hear from you.

Sets you apart from competitors

Is it your company journalists turn to when they need a comment about changes in your industry or sector?

Media training helps you think like reporters and understand what the media wants.

And it gives you the confidence to put yourself out there and ensure the media view you as the go-to experts.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR THE ORGANISATION

Engage existing customers

Your customers want to hear from you.

They want you to succeed as it means they have made the correct decision to back you.

Media training gives you the tools to get out there, spread your good news, and show your customers they made the right choice.

And reach new ones

How much do you spend on advertising?

What media do your customers use?

Media training will help you target the media your audience uses, deliver stories those outlets want to use, amplify your message and shape public perception.

Boosts brand exposure

Media exposure is a brilliant way to boost awareness of your brand. And your credibility.

It puts a face to your name and builds more connections.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR THE ORGANISATION

Improved communication

Media training courses should encourage organisations to think about their audience.

And as media training skills are transferable benefits often go beyond media interviews.

An audience-first approach can improve communication throughout your organisation.

It could mean more productive meetings, improved emails and better business calls.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR SPOKESPEOPLE

Here are some of the main ways it helps your spokespeople

Prepared

Media training ensures spokespeople are properly prepared for interviews with journalists.

It helps them overcome the anxieties many feel about stepping into the media spotlight.

And it shows them how to handle the different interview formats, manage difficult questions, ensure they can get their message across clearly, control the conversation, avoid pitfalls and communicate with confidence and clarity.

Demystifies the media

Unless you have worked in or close to the industry, the media world can feel strange.

What does 'newsworthy' even mean? What makes a good news story? How do stories get picked up by reporters?

Good media training will remove the mystery surrounding the news media and ensure spokespeople understand what journalists look for in a media interview.

This knowledge can help spokespeople gain more coverage and airtime for their company - journalists want to speak to interviewees they know will help them tell a good story.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR SPOKESPEOPLE

Raise the profile of your leaders

Leaders who get involved in the media conversation are usually perceived as industry experts.

Once they have given a good interview, journalists will want to speak to them again and again.

Yes, they have extensive contacts. But often, they are up against demanding headlines and will quickly want to speak to someone they know will add value to the story.

Transferable skills

The skills and techniques learnt during a media training course don't just help with talking to journalists.

It is something we hear from our clients and delegates all the time. They tell us how these skills help them in boardroom and client meetings, and to answer questions from colleagues or stakeholders.

Additionally, appearing in front of cameras and microphones is no longer restricted to media events.

Many companies increasingly use video, webinars, live streaming, podcasts and online masterclasses as part of internal and external communication strategies.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR COMMS TEAM

We could not forget the comms team.

Here are some of the main ways media training helps those working in comms, PR and media teams.

Shine a light on comms

Media training is an excellent way of improving relationships between comms and public relations teams and their organisation's senior leaders.

Good training will reinforce the importance of the comms team's role and shine a light on the challenges they face.

It increases awareness among executives - and other spokespeople - of the work needed to create proactive media opportunities and navigate the evolving media landscape.

Comms team members regularly observe our media training. And it is a brilliant way of demystifying their work.

Improved understanding helps build trust.

And it should prevent spokespeople from questioning why that high-profile radio interview must happen at 6am.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR COMMS TEAM

Problem spotting

Journalists should prepare thoroughly before they deliver their media training courses. We know our ones carry out detailed research on the companies they work with.

And they often uncover areas that may not play out well in the media. That could be issues around executive pay, business practices, diversity and inclusion or sustainability, to give a few examples.

It could also be a senior leader's thoughts on an issue impacting the sector or government policy.

Identifying these issues - and potentially exploring them during a mock media interview - can help prevent them from later turning into a crisis or public relations disaster.

Proactive spokespeople

Have you ever secured media interest only to find spokespeople are reluctant to step forward and be interviewed? It is a scenario many will find familiar.

Good training will make that a thing of the past.

Not only will you have spokespeople ready and willing to step forward into the spotlight, but because they understand what the media wants, they may also come to you with story ideas.

MEDIA TRAINING BENEFITS FOR COMMS TEAM

Tested messages

Media training is an excellent way of developing and refining messages for your audience.

Organisations have been known to spend thousands developing messages, only to find they are not particularly media-friendly. Or that they unravel under scrutiny.

Media training enables those messages to be tested in a safe environment.

It can also unearth better examples and brilliant stories that make them more engaging and ensure they resonate.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN TYPES OF MEDIA TRAINING PROVIDERS?

So, we've learnt there are many benefits to gain from media training.

There are also many different media training providers.

They fall into three main categories:

1. Freelance media trainers
2. PR Agencies
3. Specialist media training companies

Let's take a closer look at each option now.

FREELANCE MEDIA TRAINERS

Freelancers are often former journalists or PR professionals who offer media training courses.

Their lower overheads mean it can be a cost-effective option.

And because they often work alone, they can be flexible, adaptable and offer a personalised approach.

They may also have expertise in working with a particular sector.

But their size can also mean they have limited resources and facilities, which can be a problem if you want to train a large group.

And they may not have the insurance needed to satisfy your compliance teams.

Their availability may also be limited because of their work with other clients, and they may have few options if a course is cancelled because of illness or a change in priorities.

It is also important to consider the quality and experience of freelance tutors can vary.

And they may also be unable to offer continuous professional development plans and post-course support.

PR AGENCIES

Many PR agencies offer media training as part of their services. It often focused on messaging and interview techniques.

One of the advantages is that they will have a good understanding of your organisation, industry and audience if they are already working with you.

And training is likely to integrate neatly with your broader PR strategy.

So, it can be a convenient option.

But convenience can come at a cost.

The training may be more of a secondary service than an area of expertise. It could be delivered by someone with a good understanding of the media but who lacks journalism or training experience.

PR agencies are also unlikely to have their own TV and radio studio, meaning you miss that crucial experience from your training. Or you face an additional hire cost.

SPECIALIST MEDIA TRAINING COMPANIES

The other option is companies that focus on media training – companies like ours.

We have been delivering media training for around 40 years.

When you work with us, you can be reassured your training will be delivered by current working journalist tutors.

And our experienced support team, who take care of all the course details, ensures our tutors can focus on your development.

Your training will also take place in broadcast-quality studios with a dedicated tech team who ensure everything works properly.

Larger providers are also more likely to offer proven methodology and training consistency – ideal if you have several cohorts of delegates you want to train.

Our passionate account managers will also work with you to ensure we create a course just for you – we do not believe in a one-size-fits-all approach to media training.

And we have a broader range of options available.

SPECIALIST MEDIA TRAINING COMPANIES

Often, an initial conversation with a client about media training results in a course that includes elements of some of our other training, such as crisis communication, presentation skills or leadership communication.

And your time with us is more than a training day. We pride ourselves on our post-course support, which includes extensive tutor feedback and blogs and eBooks to help you continue to improve and develop your skills.

We've also got an amazing new AI training companion – called Thirty Seven - that fills the gap between media training course and your next media appearance. It enables you to use your skills in AI-powered media interview roleplays that are available whenever you need them.

What about the cons?

Working with specialist media training companies like ours is unlikely to be the cheapest option.

With other specialist companies, you may also need to check they offer tailored courses and that 'bespoke' is not just a buzzword.

Also, check that they can prove a consistently high level of training and a range of experienced tutors still working in the media.

WHAT ARE THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING A MEDIA TRAINING PROVIDER?

To get the most benefit from your media skills training course, you face some key considerations.

On the following pages we've listed all the questions you should ask a training provider before committing to work with them.

Q: HOW DO YOU BESPOKE EACH COURSE?

We've put this one first because it is pivotal.

A one-size-fits-all media approach to training might be cheap, but it is not effective.

The training will not meet the exact needs of your organisation or your delegates.

Some spokespeople will have plenty of media experience and want to build on initial training and sharpen their skills with mock interviews. On another course, the delegates could be new to the media.

Some organisations are seeking TV coverage. Others may be looking to specialist trade publications or wanting to get on more podcasts.

Media training courses must be tailored to different aims and experience levels.

This is why we believe brilliant training starts with the work carried out behind the scenes before the course to understand what the client needs and wants to achieve.

Q: HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR TRAINING PRACTICAL?

Media training theory is vital.

And if you train with us, you will benefit from our unique training methodology honed over four decades. It includes things like understanding what makes something newsworthy, storytelling and techniques for handling challenging questions.

But your course must enable you to put theory to the test.

We believe people apply their knowledge best when they play an active role in their learning, receive immediate constructive feedback and have fun.

So, we pack every media training course with realistic mock interviews where spokespeople can put what they learn to the test, practice their new skills, try to stay calm when faced with tricky questions, and start to feel comfortable and confident ahead of future media appearances.

And those interviews will be in the formats you are likely to face in the real world. There is little value in taking up a lot of your media training course with television interviews, for example, if you feel that is an unlikely format for your organisation.

Q: WHO WILL DELIVER THE TRAINING COURSE?

You need to know who will deliver your training course.

Do they still work as a journalist and have their finger on the pulse of the rapidly evolving media landscape? Do they have relevant experience reporting on your sector? Can they teach and engage a classroom?

Our trainers are current working journalists from the UK's top newsrooms who also have extensive experience in delivering training.

They know what makes a great interview and what spokespeople need to succeed in the media spotlight.

And just as they would for a real interview, they do their research ahead of the course.

They will pull together background information about your business, look at what your organisation has previously been in the news for, and explore what else is happening in your sector or industry.

We believe this detailed research adds another layer of realism to the training delegates experience with us.

Q: HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD ATTEND EACH COURSE?

Ratios matter.

Media training should be hands-on and involve many opportunities to build confidence, practice skills and receive personalised feedback.

To achieve that, you need to get the right balance between training team and delegates.

If you don't, your participants may find they spend much of the course watching others being interviewed.

Of course, there are advantages to observing your colleagues trying to communicate under pressure from a reporter.

But nothing beats having opportunities to practice being a spokesperson and answer questions from a journalist yourself.

In our experience courses deliver the best outcomes when they work on a maximum ratio of one media trainer to three delegates.

If you are looking for a training course for your CEO or another boardroom level leader, one-to-one training could work better. Some CEOs are reluctant to take part in group courses because they fear a weakness being exposed in front of colleagues during media training.

Q: DO YOU HAVE STUDIOS THAT WE CAN USE?

If you think your spokespeople are likely to be interviewed in a studio in the real world, you need a media training course that can offer the experience.

Radio, TV and podcast studios can feel strange and daunting even for the most experienced and senior of communicators - there's nothing in your normal working life which prepares you for it.

It's essential you make them seem less alien so your spokespeople can feel confident and deliver messages with clarity and consistency.

We can offer media training at studios throughout the country, including at our headquarters in Winnersh, near Reading.

Q: WHAT HAPPENS IF A TRAINER IS ILL?

We know it can be tricky to find a suitable date for a media training course, particularly if you are looking to train a senior leadership team with all their conflicting diary demands.

So, there is nothing more frustrating than having a course cancelled at short notice because the tutor is ill.

Providers with access to a wide range of tutors reduce the chances of this happening and are usually more able to offer a wide range of dates for training, which can suit the diaries of all your senior leaders.

Q: WHAT SUPPORT WILL THE TRAINER HAVE TO ORGANISE AND RUN THE COURSE?

There's a lot that goes into a successful training course.

There is all the pre-course work to design something bespoke and find the right tutors to deliver the training.

Then there are things like catering and accessibility issues.

On the training day, there is a lot of technology to check and interviews to record.

A tutor having to think about all of that might be distracted.

It's why we share the load.

We have a team that takes care of the administration aspects of the training, and our AV technicians ensure everything runs smoothly on the day – freeing up the tutor to provide a first-class course and detailed, individual feedback.

Q: WHAT PRE-COURSE PREPERATIONS WILL YOU DO?

Your media training course time is precious – there is a lot to squeeze into a short period.

So, it's worth looking at what media training companies do ahead of the course to help your delegates make the most of their training.

Do they ask delegates to consider and identify the subjects they want to discuss during the course? And the challenging questions they could face?

Do they want to know what your delegates aim to achieve from the training?

Do they ask them to reflect on any previous media interviews they have had?

These types of questions are vital for making the course content even more bespoke and can save valuable time at the start of the course.

It's why we send a form – called a pre-course questionnaire – to all our delegates ahead of the training day.

It helps get them in the right frame of mind for the training. And it means our tutors can think in advance about how they can best help those attending.

Q: WHAT POST-COURSE SUPPORT WILL WE GET?

Have you heard about the forgetting curve?

It's the name given to the theory that 70 per cent of new information is forgotten within 24 hours if we don't reinforce it.

Scary stuff. But you can't run away from it or hope it goes away. We believe it shows why media training should be more than just a training day.

Training providers should give delegates access to post-course resources that reinforce and support learning and continually develop their skills.

If you book training with us, your delegates will get the opportunity to continue their learning with our AI-powered training companion called Thirty Seven.

It enables delegates to test their media interview skills with our AI journalists and get instant feedback based on our training methodology.

It is a great way to keep skills sharp during the gap between a training course and the next media opportunity.

And if that is not enough, your delegates can also join our mailing list and receive blogs and eBooks containing the latest media training tips and advice.

Q: WHAT EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE IN OUR SECTOR?

Most journalists are generalists.

What does that mean?

Essentially, it means they have a working knowledge of most sectors.

But if you are investing in media training, there could be times when you need to be put through your paces by someone with a detailed understanding of your sector, its issues and vulnerabilities.

It is particularly true if you are preparing your spokespeople for trade interviews, where they will be more likely to encounter journalists with in-depth knowledge of your sector.

Journalist tutors with extensive experience in covering your sector will ensure your spokespeople get the most out of their training.

Q: WHAT TESTIMONIALS CAN YOU PROVIDE?

Anyone can say they provide high-quality training.

So, how do you check those words are meaningful and credible?

If you think you may have found a potential media training partner, it's worth finding out what others make of their service to check the credibility of their claims before you commit.

Why not ask to speak with some of their clients? If they refuse, it could be a sign you should back away.

If you know people working in comms in other organisations, ask them what media training companies they have used and whether they would recommend them.

Some people ask their connections on LinkedIn for recommendations.

It is also worth checking Coursecheck – the evaluation system for all training courses.

It is a brilliant way of getting a feel for what delegates think about the courses.

Q: HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR THEORIES AND TRAINING METHODOLOGY?

Looking at the free advice offered by media training companies can be another valuable check.

And give you a feel for the content you can expect during your training course.

Many companies are active on social media.

Or they will have ‘resources’ and ‘blog sections’ on their websites.

Does the advice they issue look professional and well thought out? Is it advice you think your spokespeople should follow? Or does it feel a bit outdated or generic?

A regularly updated media training blog can also be a great help for your delegates after training, offering ongoing expert tips and advice.

Can't find your trainer on social media? It is worth asking why. After all, they would probably encourage your organisation to be active.

Q: HOW DO YOU ENSURE OUR TRAINING IS CONFIDENTIAL?

It may not be the most exciting consideration, but it is not one to overlook.

If you want to prepare your spokespeople to practice answers to questions on sensitive issues you do not want to appear in the media or discuss the launch of a product which cannot yet be discussed publicly, for example, you need to know your training session takes place in a safe environment.

A good media training company will offer a confidentiality agreement covering tutors, technicians and anyone else who may work on the course, giving your peace of mind.

Q: WHAT INSURANCES DO YOU HAVE IN PLACE?

Again, not the most exciting question.

And not one that naturally springs to mind when they think about media training.

But it should be a key consideration.

Media training is an investment. And you need to know that investment is protected.

So, check whether your training company has comprehensive insurance coverage.

For example, we have extensive insurance in place, including employers' liability, public liability, product liability and professional indemnity.

Why does this matter?

Well, it helps protect you in the event of unexpected issues.

And, if your chosen training company has them in place, introducing them as a new supplier will be much smoother because their insurance credentials will satisfy your legal and compliance teams.

CONCLUSION

Every organisation can gain from learning how to better communicate with the media and public.

But not all media training is created equally.

You must choose wisely, ensure you make the most of your investment and show a return on your training investment.

Look for a provider that understands your sector, is inventive, tailors course content for your organisation, and offers the highest level of realism and expertise.

And a provider that offers long-term value, ensuring your spokespeople are ready to handle media interactions and make a lasting impression in every media appearance.

ABOUT MEDIA FIRST

We've been delivering media training for around 40 years.

This includes working with 40 of the FTSE 100, public relations companies, charities, public sector organisations and businesses of all sizes and helping them better prepare for media interviews.

We put you in the hands of our experts.

We have more than 30 tutor journalists from national, regional, trade and local media who deliver our tailored training – and you'll recognise many of them from TV and radio news programmes.

They will equip your delegates with up-to-date, tried and trusted practical skills and techniques to execute strong media performances, control interviews, and deliver memorable messages.

[Get in touch](#) with one of our account managers now to find out more about how we can help you.

And to learn more about Thirty Seven - our AI-powered communications coach visit www.37.space

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Adam Fisher is an experienced comms, media management and PR professional and former journalist.

As Media First's content editor, he regularly shares insight and advice on media interviews and highlights good and bad examples.

He's also written an [eBook on preparing for media interviews](#).

Adam is also part of the Media First training team.