

Law firm leaders who are responsible for executing their firm's strategic plan need to feel comfortable communicating with national, local and industry-specific reporters, but few people, no matter how bright or accomplished, are born knowing how to do this effectively. When you see a lawyer successfully manage an interview or become a trusted source for a reporter, it's usually because she or he has received media training.

Media training comes in many shapes and sizes, and the best kind is customized to the specific needs of your firm. Maybe you want to make sure your associates know the basics. Maybe you are dealing with a sensitive internal matter or case. Maybe you have a knack for PR and just want to get better at it. All of those are great reasons to invest in this kind of professional development.

Here are some of the most common topics Page 2 covers in media training for clients:

Illinois' professional guidelines for trial publicity (or your state's version)

The Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct touch on Trial Publicity (Rule 3.6) and Advertising (Rule 7.2). The original text of these two rules and the various comments that have been issued around them since they went into effect in 2010 have helped define specific parameters for what information lawyers can and cannot ethically share with reporters and the public regarding their work. Many lawyers interpret this to mean they should never talk to anyone in the media about anything. In fact, while a lawyer is highly constrained in the kinds of client-specific information they can share of their own initiative with the media, the rules do provide significant leeway. Attorneys can act to mitigate adverse publicity and we can help you decide how to do this.

Concerns for practice group heads and others in supervisory positions

Leaders who supervise other attorneys in dealing with the media and general public must conform to another rule that defines their obligations (Rule 5.1 – Responsibilities of Partners, Managers, and Supervisory Lawyers). They also need to understand how to work with in-house or outside public relations or marketing professionals (Rule 5.3 – Responsibilities Regarding Nonlawyer Assistance) in media matters.

Mastering specific content

In cases where a spokesperson needs to show command of challenging material, we can help teams evaluate lawyers' current knowledge and command of material likely to be covered, and help shore up, refine or prepare specific, detailed talking points.

Identifying messaging and tools for conveying it

Once we help you nail down the central ideas you want to get across (and pitfalls you'd like to avoid), we focus on tools like data and anecdotes that can prepare you for questions that may come up in future media interviews. Then we practice authentic, on-message answers.

Polishing your delivery

Here we tackle the finishing touches and techniques including storytelling, body language, bridging, blocking and re-direction that help you navigate media interviews and group presentations to move the conversation in a desired direction and win an audience over to your point of view. We also research specific reporters and create strategies for engaging most effectively according to their respective styles.

The “rules of attribution”

Most of us know that journalists follow a system for helping readers understand where information in a news story comes from, and this system also protects their sources on sensitive material. But how exactly does “not for attribution,” “on background” or “off the record” – all of which mean slightly different things – get negotiated? We cover when it makes good sense to cooperate and share information with reporters, and how to protect your clients and the firm while doing so.

Interested in learning more? Reach out via info@page2comm.com.