Media training at ISOC
What makes a great spokesperson?

The best interviewees are confident and engaging. They give interviews with high-value impact. They project expertise, and also inspire trust. They are polished, but also authentic.

They are natural and likeable. They are convincing and memorable. They answer tough questions without being evasive. They stay calm under pressure.

They weren’t born that way. They mastered their art with high-quality media training.

Behind every great interview lies a set of core skills that can be taught, learned, practiced and perfected with high-quality and systematic coaching.

Many of the best trained at ISOC.

Spokespeople are guardians of reputation, and reputation is a business-critical asset.
What you will learn

Preparation
- Grasp the strategic impact of interviews for reputation.
- Plan how to generate business value from an interview.
- Prepare for an interview using a structured process.
- Draft strong messages and proof points.
- Anticipate questions by analysing the journalist.

Familiarisation
- Build confidence through practice in a safe environment with encouraging feedback.
- Normalise interview situations so that you can relax and perform at your best.
- Familiarise with a variety of formats, styles and locations (TV, radio, print, online).
- Manage fear and nerves using proven techniques.
- Work with broadcast technology: microphones and cameras.

Performance
- Improve body language (eye contact, posture, movement and gesture).
- Build self-awareness and eliminate distracting mannerisms.
- Improve voice with attention to pace, tone and volume.
- Raise your energy levels for a dynamic and engaging delivery.
Content

- Use clear language at the right level (no jargon).
- Produce strong quotes and sound-bites.
- Use three key modes: Explain, Story and Conversation.
- Deploy facts to be convincing and authoritative.
- Find news angles to make your message relevant.

Dynamics

- Understand how journalists think and how they make news judgements.
- Use traditional bridging techniques and modern alternatives to get to your messages.
- Be proactive: steer the interview – subtly – onto safe and productive topics.
- Stay in control of the agenda, direction and dynamics of an interview.
- Avoid common mistakes and pitfalls.

Challenges

- Answer difficult questions using five universal strategies, without being evasive.
- Recognise crafty interviewing tricks and techniques.
- Handle aggressive journalists and confrontational questioning.
- Stay positive and calm under pressure.
Topics

Scenarios

You will do three to five practice interviews if you are training in a group, or up to 10 if you are training one-on-one. They will vary in topic, format and difficulty so that you are always stimulated and challenged, but never far out of your comfort zone.

The subject matter will be familiar, realistic and based around your own knowledge and expertise.

We recommend a mix of proactive topics (positive news or thought leadership) and reactive topics (problematic issues that require comment), since journalists will surely ask about both.
INTERVIEW FORMATS

There are endless possibilities for scenarios. Here are a few:

- An “expert commentator” interview on a live rolling news show
- A studio interview for a major news announcement or launch
- A profile interview with a national newspaper, with a video clip for its website
- A telephone interview with a correspondent for an international newswire
- A studio interview with a discussion programme on a talk radio station
- A pre-recorded on-location interview for a local TV news feature package
- An informal stand-up interview with a reporter covering a conference
- A live evening TV panel discussion on a “thought leadership” topic
- A “down-the-line” interview speaking direct to camera with an earpiece
Only skilled spokespeople can deliver the right message consistently and make it stick. Only versatile spokespeople can excite stakeholders about everyday news – and reassure them in a crisis.
1) Core concepts

In the first of two briefings, your communication coach will cover the concepts and best practices that are central to every strong media interview. This section is brief – you will not sit through a long boring lecture.

You will learn to:

- Position your ideas as strong messages
- Reinforce them with examples and proof points
- Convince journalists of your news value
- Make the most of your voice and body language
- Work professionally with cameras and microphones
- Capitalise on opportunities and avoid mistakes

2) Structured preparation

We will give you a personalised interview scenario written to simulate topics and situations that you are likely to face in real media encounters.

Then while you wait for your turn to be interviewed, we will guide you through a structured preparation process using worksheets to develop the ideas and resources that you will need, including messages, proof points, news angles and media insight.

3) First interview

When you feel ready, we will bring you through to the interview room, equipped with a full mobile studio set-up including broadcast-standard camera, sound and lights. You will give a brief interview lasting around three minutes.

If this is your first time on camera, or you are feeling nervous, we will make it friendly and positive to help you familiarise, relax and perform to your full potential.
4) Feedback and coaching

Next, we will play back the interviews on a big screen. Your coach will pause the replay to give analysis and feedback, always positive and constructive, and always in the form of specific learning points that you can use to do better next time.

We normally give feedback in a group session so that everyone can learn from each other and benefit from discussions.

5) Advanced techniques

The second briefing covers best practice and techniques for difficult situations and challenging interviews.

You will watch fresh and relevant video clips showing practical examples of good and bad performance.

**You will learn to:**

- Answer tough questions without being evasive
- Deal with confrontational journalists
- Handle sensitive topics and crisis interviews
- Direct the interview agenda proactively
- Recognise and manage subtle dynamics at play

6) Further interview cycles

From now on, the session is purely practical. In a real interview, there is no time to reflect on theory: it must be internalised through practice so that you do the right thing instinctively.

You will spend most of your media training session “learning by doing” in a series of simulated interviews with the journalist.
Outcomes

After training

At the end of the day the communication coach reviews key learning points for everyone and reminds each person of their individual action points.

By this stage – without exception – we will have seen a measurable improvement in performance on camera, and everyone is feeling inspired and ready for the real thing.

The trainers will compile performance analysis reports and recommendations for HR and communication departments as required.

ISOC coaches are available by telephone and email for follow-up questions and advice.
ISOC courses are fun, stimulating, interesting, and designed around practical skills that you can put to work straight away.

RESOURCES

You will take away a comprehensive media training pack including:

• The ISOC media training manual. This comprehensive document covers all of the key principles and theory behind media interview performance and expands on the topics covered in training.
• A copy of your interviews on an ISOC memory stick.
• A set of A5 desk-drawer checklists for structured preparation.
• A wallet-sized ISOC reminder card for last-minute checks.
• Access to the private alumni section of isoc.com where you will find electronic copies of all of the presentations, case studies and other resources featured in the course.
Next steps

Private in-house media training
Customised media training enables us to prepare the most relevant content and scenarios for your organisation.

It more cost-effective for larger groups, and also the right choice if you need to the session to cover confidential or sensitive topics.

Email us an outline of what you need, and we’ll reply with a detailed proposal. You can also call your local ISOC centre for free advice and ideas.

Public media training courses
Public media training courses run regularly throughout the year at ISOC training centres.

See www.isoc.com/course/media-interview-training/ for dates and to book online.
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