

MAXIMIZE YOUR NEXT MEDIA TRAINING

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## The Headline

It comes as a surprise to many of my clients. They sometimes stare in disbelief when they hear that I spend far more time preparing their media training than leading the workshop itself.

There is a lot to pull together if a session is to be done right. The purpose of this position paper is to make life easier for companies that call on consultants to guide the professional development of their spokespeople — both in the C-suite and elsewhere — when it comes to this specialized branch of communications.

The intent here is to provide a set of easy-to-follow best practice standards for communications executives who organize [media training workshops](#). Further, it offers companies that pursue media training a peek behind the curtain and a clearer picture of what needs to happen and why. Much of this knowledge also applies to related disciplines like [presentation skills training](#) and [Congressional testimony](#) preparation.

*Successful media training programs are designed by choice, not by chance.*

It is vital to place media training in context. Smart companies aim for more than a single spasm of professional development. It takes a sustained program — one that occurs over time, not simply one lone workshop — to achieve your company's long-range business and public policy goals.

I encourage you to think of media training in a new light. The old construct centered around a one-time workshop. No consultant I know is capable of transforming spokespeople into sparkling sources in one fell swoop. That's not the way smart consultants work — or the way smart companies approach media training.

The objective is more than simply making your executives talk pretty. Rather, it is to instill the view that media training is a cohesive program that helps you reach a healthier bottom line, gain passage of meaningful legislation, and outperform the competition. Those overarching goals are what media training is — or, at least, should be — all about.

The groundwork can be broken down into five main categories:

1. Prepare the participants
2. Prepare your consultant
3. Prepare other internal staff
4. Prepare the training facility
5. Prepare the training agenda

We will review each separately, revealing steps your company can take in order to achieve a media training experience that is as smooth and headache-free as possible.

One note about an important item that is beyond the scope of this paper. It will not delve into the specifics of selecting the right consultant for your needs. That topic is covered fully in [“A Buyer’s Guide to Communications Strategy Consultants.”](#)

## **1.0 Prepare the Participants**

There are both logistical and psychological concerns to consider when priming those who will actively participate in the program. It is vital to ensure that communication flows in both directions in order to motivate them to attend and to assuage any hesitation they may harbor.

Once the participants have been identified, they should receive two documents, one informational, the other intended to solicit information from them. This underscores the two-way communication channel, getting them comfortable with the situation and the fact that they are empowered to ask any questions they may have. It also gives them a first glimpse into your consultant’s style and approach.

## 1.1 Inform Your Participants

The informational document explains what they can expect during their workshop.

This is particularly important for those who have never experienced media training before. The entire notion may seem foreign and, in some cases, a bit scary. Some

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individuals may feel they are being targeted because they have done something wrong when dealing with reporters in the past.

The reality is most people are chosen to participate because they already serve as spokespeople or they have been identified as potential rising stars. And sometimes larger group trainings are held to spot which individuals are best suited to dealing with the media (and which

should be kept far away from the microphone and the reporter's notebook). Remedial trainings do happen, but they are — and should remain — a distinct minority. The cold, harsh reality: If you have a chronic underperformer talking to the press, it is best to cut your losses, reassign them, and groom someone else to fill that critical role.

## 1.2 Paint a Vivid Picture

What should your information document contain? First of all, outline for your spokespeople what they can expect during their workshop, targeting the information to your specific situation. I like to point out that this will be a customized experience tailored to their precise needs (of course, you need to be sure the consultant you choose actually believes that and follows through on the pledge). Explain that it will be devoted to:

- Development of [key messages](#);
- On camera simulated interviews with an ex-reporter (your workshop leader should be a former reporter);
- Recording all exercises to video which is then played back and critiqued.

While these elements this may seem clear to you and me, I have seen the surprised and shocked looks on the faces of participants when they first caught sight of a camera upon entering the training facility.

This also holds true for sessions conducted via video link, which has become more relevant given the media's increased reliance on [remote interviews](#). Your consultant should record each of the remote simulations, then provide the footage to the participants afterward as a learning device. Indeed, if there was any benefit to the pandemic, it was this heightened dependence on such interviews. While it poses a whole new set of technical trials (see [“Remote Media Interviews Are Here to Stay: How Your Spokespeople Can Thrive”](#) for details), the format does make it more convenient in many cases, saving the spokesperson from having to travel to a studio or arrange a dedicated video connection.

On another preparatory aspect, offer a bit of background about your consultant, providing participants with a biographical sketch or a reference to his or her website. At the very least, advise them that they will be studying with an experienced communications authority who focuses on teaching C-suite executives and other spokespeople how to communicate with the public (as part of your due diligence, make sure your consultant is not a [jack of all trades masquerading as an authority](#)).

When I lead a workshop, I like to let participants know in advance that our goal is to begin shaping a sustained professional development plan designed to help them work with the media more effectively over the long haul. Some consultants deemphasize this long-term aspect. I believe it to be critical to enduring success.

Tell your spokespeople what, if any, types of take home resources you plan to give them. Books, guides, video clips of their simulated interviews, and follow up contact with their consultant by remote video appointments, telephone, or email fall into this category.

In this informational document, I also recommend pointing out what media training is *not*. For example, it is not a quick fix that provides everything they need to know in a single day. It is not a place for those who lack commitment to learning how to deal more effectively with the press. Nor is it a substitute office to deal with phone calls, texts, and

emails. And by all means, it should not be viewed as something they do just to get the boss off their backs. If you get a sense that one or more of your participants does not want to take an active role in the furthering their abilities, let them take a pass. No point in poisoning the atmosphere for those who are eager to sharpen their communications edge.

### 1.3 Gaining Initial Feedback

The second document — the one soliciting information — takes the form of a questionnaire that probes a number of areas regarding their experience with the media to date.

It should also be designed to unearth attitudes and biases toward the press. Some consultants look for this, others don't. My belief is that failing to gain these attitudinal insights is akin to conducting a workshop while wearing blinders.

But you must decide whether this is important to your business and its communications objectives when you select your consultant.

What questions are found on the feedback form? They vary depending on the specific goals of your firm as it relates to this particular session. At the same time, there are certain core issues you will want to probe on every occasion.

Begin with what benefits they want to gain, and ask them to be as specific as possible. This will help your workshop leader fine tune the curriculum to a much more personalized level. Also get a sense of how much experience they have had serving as a media spokesperson (if any), what types of reporters they typically interact with, whether they have been interviewed remotely, and how they would characterize their past performances.

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Determine if they have participated in any previous media training programs, either in person or remote. If the latter, try to get a sense of how comprehensive it was. For example, was the video session a far-reaching workshop or more a matter of merely engaging in a few rounds of [Q&A](#) with little to no didactic learning?

Next, solicit their general impressions of reporters, then dig a bit deeper and discern whether there are any reporters they believe are biased one way or the other as it affects your business.

Don't forget to search out any "angels" and "devils" — other news sources who would support your position or try to tear down your arguments. Ask if there are any situations, real or potential, that would make them uncomfortable. Again, your consultant needs to know about such factors in order to smoke them out in the safety and security of the training environment.

Finish with an open-ended question that asks whether there is anything else they want to share. Responses here can be revealing.

## 2.0 Prepare Your Consultant

There are a number of essential items your [media training consultant](#) will need to review in preparation. While the precise list differs with each topic and each individual, some essential requirements include:

- The number of participants in your workshop.
- Biographical sketches for each participant.
- Relevant background information on the issues at hand.
- Messages you have developed for your issues (see Section 5.2 for a more detailed discussion of messaging requirements).
- Lists of questions divided into three categories:
  - Routine questions you expect your spokespeople to receive.
  - Questions you want reporters to ask them.
  - Tough questions for which they must be prepared.



- An additional document based on the above questions in a Q&A format that sets forth sample message-oriented responses.
- News clips (including video) surrounding the issues at hand, particularly any in which your executives are quoted or interviewed.

You should note that the above items are rarely optional. They merely form the foundational background information upon which your consultant will build the day's agenda.

*Failing to gain attitudinal insights is akin to conducting a workshop while wearing blinders.*

If you are not able or willing to provide this fundamental information, let him or her know as soon as possible. The rare times I run into this situation, it tells me that I either need to lower my client's expectations or give them time to locate another consultant willing to work under such restrictions.

## 2.1 Supplementary Background Information

Most companies should have the above items readily at hand. Digging a level or two deeper, there is other material you can provide your consultant that will facilitate preparation of your workshop and, thereby, raise the odds for a successful project.

In addition to the above list, consider informing your consultant about these items specific to each participant:

- A brief narrative outlining the media experience of each individual. Your workshop leader needs to understand whether they have vast experience or little to none.
- Any video or audio of media interviews in which they have participated. Video or audio of presentations they have delivered can also offer helpful context.
- Relevant background information on any competitors or critics. News clips, website links, and annual reports represent some examples.

Some additional organizational information is also recommended:

- Materials on key services or products. This can come in the form of web pages, brochures, consumer ads, and many other modes.
- Information on competitors' services or products.
- Annual/quarterly reports.
- Recent controversies. News clips rarely tell the whole story behind crises, be they large or small. Offer a brief narrative document that presents additional details and deeper context. Be open and frank here. Your consultant needs to know where pitfalls exist.
- Challenges, vulnerabilities, and competitive issues that could arise in the form of reporter questions.
- Digital media profiles, and any personal websites or blogs your spokespeople maintain.
- Competitors' website addresses.
- Recordings of analyst calls, if yours is a public company. These can offer insights into issues that may arise under questioning from the press.
- List of trade press and reputable blogs that cover your issues. Today's media is fragmented to such a degree, your consultant may not be familiar with small yet influential outlets that cover your industry.

*A media training workshop is hectic enough on the calmest of days. Refuse to let yours turn into a sideshow that features random staff members traipsing in and out.*

If the training program revolves around an imminent campaign or product launch, be sure to furnish your consultant with a pending media interview schedule or, at the very least, your media targets. As your pitching evolves, send regular updates with information on which markets and reporters your executives need to prepare for.

Also send along a copy of your pitch letter and press kit. Remember to update this information as is subject to change. Early on in the process, share drafts of these materials so your consultant has some idea what you want to say and who you want to reach.

### 3.0 Prepare Other Internal Staff

Perhaps the most oft-ignored element of preparing for a media training involves steeling staff members who are not part of the workshop. I can guarantee that your office will be abuzz with chatter about the pending session.

Water cooler gossip will range from, “Jim is being dragged to this meeting as punishment for that lame news interview he did,” to, “Pam gets all the perks. How come we never get to attend these boondoggles?”

I strongly suggest that you nip this gossip in the bud by providing some basic information to everyone. You don’t need to unveil the entire strategy, especially if sensitive issues are in play. You decide what level of detail is appropriate. Just remember that removing some of the mystery allows you to keep a lid on the wildest of rumors.

Send an office-wide email, mention it on Slack, or add the media training as an agenda item at your staff meeting. Explain that this is all part of your [communications plan](#) designed to get your good word out to the public through the press. Don’t make an overly big deal about it, but do reach out so that you can preempt some of the tall tales liable to spread through your office if you keep people in the dark.

### 3.1 Minimizing Distractions

A media training workshop is hectic enough on the calmest of days. Refuse to let yours turn into a sideshow that features random staff members traipsing in and out.

Start by restricting the number of people in the room. Why curb attendance? The more people in the room, the lower the quality of the experience for your spokespeople. Discussions get too diffuse and rambling, and the risk of distractions increases exponentially.

*There are a number of essential items your consultant will need to review in preparation.*

Beyond the participants, one or two people from your communications staff should be in the room. These are your in-house message experts (hint: If they are not, get rid of

them or reassign them and hire someone capable). Next, you must decide, given the specifics of your situation, whether your CEO, president, or the C-suite executives overseeing a critical area add value or not. Also place a limit on the number of issue experts there to aid with detailed, factual questions during messaging discussions. It is fine for people to rotate in and out on an as needed basis, provided you don't turn the session into a never ending parade.

To avoid lots of noisy coming and going, appoint a "sergeant-at-arms" to monitor those in attendance. If someone strolls in who doesn't belong, gently but firmly escort them out. Your sergeant-at-arms can also assist if side chatter becomes a distraction, though your workshop leader should also be capable of dealing with those types of disruptions.

*Insist that everyone turn off their mobile devices when they enter the training sanctum.*

Given today's business pressures, some individuals in the room may need to deal with other matters on the day of the training. That's understandable, though you must insist that everyone (yes, everyone!) turn off their mobile devices when they enter the training sanctum. Show some respect for the learning environment and keep any conversations — face-to-face or via phone call, text, or email — to a minimum *and* take them out of the room. No one should be obsessively checking their devices. This is highly distracting to the participants and the workshop leader, and insulting to the entire process.

It is a good idea to get everyone's assent to your "no interruptions" policy at the start of the day. If someone violates those agreed-upon rules, kick them out, no questions asked. To be clear, there is no grace period; break these rules once and you're evicted. I realize that sounds harsh, but it is challenging enough under ideal circumstances to maintain the flow of a media training. Even seemingly slight distractions can derail the entire process. You may allow for some very limited exceptions revolving around emergencies. Perhaps one participant has a sick family member, or a spouse is expecting a wife to give birth at

any moment. Beyond that, there are not many reasons for anyone —I repeat, anyone — to have a device within arm’s reach.

#### 4.0 Prepare the Training Facility

One of the first logistical decisions you face is where to hold your session. Geography certainly plays a role. If, for instance, you plan to work with several [officers or board members](#), the site of your annual meeting or executive retreat may make the most sense. In many cases, your office conference room may be suitable. You can also opt for a hotel function room, conference center, or studio. If your company maintains an on-site recording studio, by all means use it for your media training.

Studios do lend an aura of authority to the proceedings. But a fancy space is not mandatory. Remember that consultants who make a big deal about having a sophisticated studio in their office are building their costs for that facility on the back of your budget. If you want to pay for that overhead, that’s fine. You know your preferences and financial capabilities best.

If planning a remote training, it is vital to prepare participants adequately. Even though many of us have honed our approach to remote meetings, I still witness too many otherwise smart executives ignore the preparations necessary for such encounters.

*Veteran consultants recognize the need to be able to react quickly to the participants, often changing the “temperature” of the environment on a moment’s notice.*

Audio and video quality when working remote are crucial. Just think of the times you’ve bailed out of watching an interview because of atrocious sound or picture. Thus, never neglect the need to address these facets during the training. Attributes like adequate lighting and a good quality stand-alone microphone are de rigueur (a reminder to check out [“Remote Media Interviews Are Here to Stay: How Your Spokespeople Can Thrive”](#) for extensive advice).

## 4.1 Check Your Checklist

Making sure you have the right [physical setup](#) begins with a methodical checklist. Let's review some of the considerations.

Is the room the right size? Something too big makes the whole process seem insignificant. Something too small feels cramped and creates an inferior atmosphere.

Small also hurts because you have some gear that needs to fit (more on this in a moment). You need a monitor or projector to allow for video playback. If your workshop leader plans on showing slides during part of the didactic discussions, a projector and screen are necessary. A flip chart with blank paper or a dry erase board (accompanied by markers that work) is also needed to capture key thoughts.

Beyond the mere size of the room, examine its layout. Are there any support pillars or odd corners that could affect seating arrangements or camera angles? Does it front on a noisy street that makes concentration and audio clarity difficult? Will there be a raucous confab featuring a "motivational"

*The key to setting the agenda is to determine what is proper for the participants.*

sales seminar in the room next door? If you book a function room in a hotel, did they try to stick you in a guest suite (the general layout of these rooms combined with their heavy, immobile furniture makes them notoriously poor options for training workshops)?

## 4.2 Getting the Right Shots

Don't forget to leave some space for the camera and videographer. And yes, [you do need a professional videographer](#). Some organizations try to get by on the cheap by having an inexperienced person video record the practice exercises. Worse yet, some expect their consultant to take on that task. This penny-wise yet pound-foolish approach results in an inferior learning experience. You pay good money for consultants to educate your spokespeople. Don't you deserve 100 percent focus and performance?

Here is what happens when amateurs run the equipment: Video quality suffers due to substandard knowledge of both camera skills and lighting. Audio recording worsens when they try to sneak by using the cheap microphone built into their personal units.

Now for the real important fact: Workshop leaders who attempt to operate a camera simply face too many distractions, lowering the effectiveness of the program. Veteran consultants recognize the need to be able to react quickly to happenings in the room, often changing the “temperature” of the environment on a moment’s notice depending on the signals — both verbal and nonverbal — the participants send.

## 5.0 Prepare the Training Agenda

Broken down into its most basic components, most media training workshops feature three areas:

- 1) [Message development](#)
- 2) [Simulated practice interviews](#)
- 3) Where participants should take their professional development following the workshop

Some consultants prefer to begin every session with a review of media relations basics (typically accompanied by a long, drawn-out slide deck), then lump all the practice rounds into whatever time is left at the end of the day. I suggest avoiding this one-size-fits-all approach.

The key to setting the agenda is to determine what is proper for the participants. Sketch out a plan with your consultant as part of the preparation phase. Do keep in mind that legitimate, knowledgeable experts should be skilled at reading what the participants need as the workshop progresses. If he or she decides to change something on the fly, there is likely a compelling reason for doing so.

My clients sometimes ask me for a training agenda very early in the preparation process. Honestly, I have no idea what to tell them until I become more familiar with the needs of their participants and their business. I freely admit that, if pressed, I will send a sample

agenda just to help them attain a comfort level. But that piece of paper usually bears little resemblance to the final curriculum.

## 5.1 Establishing a Baseline of Understanding

Didactic portions of the training can range from a Media 101 approach for those new to dealing with reporters to a quick brush up or concentration on new issues and messages for senior leaders accustomed to being interviewed.

It bears repeating that this discussion does not need to occur in isolation at the beginning of your workshop. In fact, I contend that learners are much more receptive to certain advice as situations arise during the training. If, for instance, your CFO tends to repeat

*Odds are there is no one on your staff as experienced at message development as your communications strategy consultant.*

negative language put forth by the reporter, their mind is much more attuned to a learning moment after they have viewed themselves on video repeating a negative. It may blow right by them if presented during a windy introductory lecture.

The questionnaire (see Section 1.3) should reveal to some degree your executives' experience. Your consultant should also do some independent

digging, at a minimum performing an online search to see what pops up. They should also poke around digital media sites to see what type of online trail your spokespeople have left. If the company is publicly traded, sources like Bloomberg and *The Wall Street Journal* can offer valuable insights.

## 5.2 Message Development

Beware! [Message development](#) is the one area where media trainings can fall apart. Some companies do take messaging seriously and have [crafted magnetic messages](#). But in my experience, they are a distinct minority. Sadly, this same truth exists if you employ a public relations or public affairs agency to help with message development. Some are



quite skilled, but too many fail to grasp the difference between an airtight message and a laundry list of random bullet points.

I cannot state this plainly or emphatically enough: If your messages are weak or non-existent, a media training workshop will do little good. Like a car with a serious emissions problem, it will sputter along but get nowhere fast while wasting a lot of energy and polluting the air. You would be well served to conduct a message development workshop prior to the media training (see [“Eleven Elements to Model a Magnetic Message: How to Shape Your Story for the Press, Policymakers, and the Public”](#) for more detail).

True, your spokespeople will gain some skill sharpening even with inferior messages. But when crunch time comes under the white hot lights of a real media interview, they will most assuredly fumble and stumble.

You have a choice regarding message development. Option one involves hammering out your messages in advance of the workshop. This is by far the most effective approach for it allows your spokespeople to begin to internalize the material before the simulated interviews take place.

It is important that you share your messages with your workshop leader as soon as practical. I like to get them from my clients early in the planning process, even if in draft form. Odds are there is no one on your staff as experienced at message development as a communications strategy consultant. You are paying good money for that service. Get all you can from it by asking your advisor to review your messages. He or she may have suggestions ranging from a quick tweak to a total overhaul depending on the quality of your work.

Try not to take these suggestions personally. They should be made with your business and public policy objectives in mind. If you disagree with anything, speak up. Explain why you organized it the way you did or why it is important to say something exactly as you wrote it. You have day-to-day context that your consultant lacks.

Expect the messages you begin with to change during the workshop based on participant feedback. This is altogether normal and to be expected, for a message is an always-

evolving creature. Perhaps one leg of your message falls apart under intense questioning during a practice interview. Look on the bright side. Better for that to occur in the security of your media training workshop than in a high stakes interview with a key reporter.

Option two with regard to message development — far less preferred — is to create messages during your media training workshop. This is an inefficient use of time. Participants get frustrated and cranky when they are forced to start from scratch. Plus, it drains time from the practice portion of the training.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with calling in your consultant to lead a separate messaging session before your training occurs. Just be sure to label it a messaging session — not media training — so that everyone involved has a clear

understanding of the task at hand. Once you sort out your messages in this initial session, hold an independent media training workshop a day or two later to work on implementation and practice.

Remain open to sensible changes as you go through the messaging process. It is a dynamic procedure. Nothing is ever etched in stone.

*Presuming your consultant is a thought leader in the field, do your spokespeople receive a book or training guide?*

### 5.3 Simulated Interviews

All practice interviews should be recorded to video. This applies even if your spokespeople may never appear on television. Why? Viewing and critiquing the video immediately after the fact represents the most powerful learning moments participants are likely to encounter. Remote trainings are no exception.

Even print reporters are watching for subtle (and not so subtle, for that matter) [nonverbal signals](#). A video critique demonstrates vividly body language pluses and minuses. As detailed in Section 4.2, make sure your workshop leader insists on a professional videographer to capture the interviews.

Your consultant should ask about the types of interview situations the participants are likely to face. If they fail to ask, tell them. Practice interviews involve more than simply trotting your executives willy-nilly in front of a camera.

*Viewing the video represents the most powerful learning moments participants are likely to encounter.*

Setting up a practice interview for a satellite media tour opportunity, for example, involves different parameters than a podcast or a telephone interview with a print reporter. Your consultant and videographer need to be adept at creating as closely as possible the atmosphere of a real life interview.

They may need to shift the set between interviews. If your consultant has properly briefed the videographer, these transitions should be seamless, with the videographer handling the physical set changes while the workshop leader continues the education process.

## 5.4 Post-training Agenda

Neglect the value of [post-training feedback](#) at your company's peril. Media training is not a one-off proposition. Rather, it is a single step along a course of [sustained professional development](#).

I admit to being insistent about this. Why? I have witnessed too many firms that prove content to say their spokespeople have been "media trained" just because they have gone through one session. This is poor form, to say nothing of the potential damage such an attitude causes to a company's reputation and bottom line.

Successful enterprises embrace this professional development continuum. Assuming you fall into that category, be sure to ask your consultant about ongoing contact at the very beginning of your relationship. Does your expert offer:

- Post-training consultation via telephone, video conference, or email?
- A written report?

- Follow up workshops?
- Assistance with the onboarding of new hires, inculcating them to your procedures and messages?
- Ongoing professional development materials for your spokespeople.

Presuming your consultant is a thought leader in the field, do your spokespeople receive a [book](#) or training guide? (Note: Ask some detailed questions about the materials provided. Some companies will settle for a handful of quick-copied sheets haphazardly stapled together; others prefer a publication that can sharpen skills in stages over time).

*Media training is not a one-off proposition. Rather, it is a single step along a course of sustained professional development.*

Some consultants, as part of their professional fee, even offer articles you can publish for free in your publications. This advances the growth not only of those in the room during the training, but throughout your company as well, so be sure to inquire about this possibility.

## The Kicker

Successful media training programs are designed by choice, not by chance. Keep yourself on the right path by doing your homework ahead of time:

1. Prepare your spokespeople
2. Prepare your consultant
3. Prepare other internal staff
4. Prepare the training facility
5. Prepare the training agenda

Following the best practice standards set forth in this paper leads to more than a successful professional development experience that boosts your spokespeople's careers. It also leads to achievement of your business and public policy goals — from a healthier

bottom line to legislative and regulatory success, from an ability to outperform the competition to an enhanced reputation.

Those larger goals are what [media training](#) is all about.

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## About the Author

Author and communications strategy consultant **Ed Barks** works with communications and government relations executives who counsel their C-suite leaders, and with businesses and associations that need their communications strategy and messaging to deliver bottom line results. They gain an enhanced reputation, greater confidence, more opportunities for career advancement, and achievement of long-term business and public policy goals.



He is the **author of [four business books](#)**:

- *Insider Strategies for the Confident Communicator: How to Master Meetings, Presentations, Interviews, and Advocacy*
- *Reporters Don't Hate You: 100+ Amazing Media Relations Strategies*
- *A+ Strategies for C-Suite Communications*
- *The Truth About Public Speaking: The Three Keys to Great Presentations*

Ed has contributed to a variety of publications and is the former “Speaking Sense” columnist for the *Washington Business Journal*. He has also published [numerous research reports and position papers](#), including “A Buyer’s Guide To Communications Strategy Consultants.”

More than 5700 business leaders, association executives, scientists, government officials, entertainers, and other thought leaders thank Ed for sharpening their communications edge.

According to his clients, he “knows how to elicit peak performance.” They call him “a master at connecting with his audience” and “an effective educator,” and give his communications training workshops “two thumbs up!”

He has served as President of Barks Communications since founding it in 1997. He served a nine-year tenure on the Board of Governors of the **National Press Club** and joined the faculty of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Organization Management. He is a former member of the board of directors of the Institute of Management Consultants National Capital Region, and the Consultants Section Council of the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

An inside-the-Beltway veteran, Ed has spent more than three decades in Washington, D.C. He brings another critical perspective to his clients’ communications needs — that of a broadcaster and journalist. He knows firsthand the traits and techniques of the reporting trade, thanks to a decade of experience in radio broadcasting.

Ed also publishes the **C-suite Blueprint blog**. [Follow him there](#) to receive notification of each post.