

Unit Introduction

A large part of the PAO job is talking with the media and preparing subject matter experts for their interaction with the media. More than that, though, PAOs must also remember to train the men and women who are responsible for accomplishing the mission - the men and women in uniform who do the job.

In this unit of instruction, we will talk about what you must do as a public affairs practitioner to prepare people to talk with the media



Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will be able to do the following tasks:

Describe the possible media relations training methods that can be used for:

- Junior troops, mid-level officers, enlisted and civilians (SMEs)
- Senior leadership

Explain the potential opportunities for conducting media relations training

Explain the use of a “Troop Card” and what type of information should be provided on the card

Prepare a “Troop Card” (also known as a media interview reference guide).

Describe the possible media relations training methods that can be used.

Unit Overview

In order to meet the training objectives of this unit, we will go over

- Media Training in general
- Tools needed to complete training
- How to complete the practical exercise

Media Training



There are two types of media training conducted in preparation for an interview. There is large group media training and individual media training (subject matter expert). The only difference between the two is how many people you address for each. The presentation content is the same but the delivery format may vary.

In this unit, we are concentrating on large group training. How to conduct individual media training is covered in the **Preparing a Military Spokesperson** unit of instruction.

Media Training

There is a wide range of people for whom you will provide training, including spouses, junior and senior enlisted, junior and senior officers, civilians, contractors, support personnel, operators, etc.

Taylor your presentation to your audience so that it's more interesting to them. A group of enlisted service members will appreciate one style of training where as a group of military spouses will appreciate another. Operations personnel will appreciate a different style brief from a group of budget and finance personnel. You should get to know your audience and make training fun and interesting for them.

In addition to training style, also consider the best time to train them.

Media Training

You will find that there are natural, even scheduled times that are perfect to use as the time to offer media training. The following times are examples:



- Orientation
- General Training
- Pre-deployment
- Deployment

During your training, make sure that everyone understands how to deal with the media if and when contacted.

Media Training

Orientation

The best time to provide media training is when troops first report to a command. Introduce service members to the public affairs staff and let them know your role at the command. Tell them about:

- The PA shop function and products
- The difference between internal and external audiences
- How they must notify PA about media contact, i.e. if the media calls them they should direct that reporter to the public affairs office to coordinate an interview.
- Hometown News Release programs for troops regarding promotions, awards, transfers, etc.

Media Training

General Training

Another opportunity to train the troops is during annual or periodic training periods. Integrate annual and refresher training on how to handle the media as a public affairs function.

Remember, there is always the possibility that any one of them may be a subject matter expert at any given time.

In addition, give periodic briefings at staff meetings. Because most people won't deal with the media as often as public affairs practitioners, it's important to offer occasional reminders on how to deal with the media.

Media Training

Pre-deployment



If troops are deployed for an operation, there's the likelihood that media will not only be interested in talking with troops but also with their families who stay behind. Public affairs officers should remember to focus media training for that population, as well as those who are deploying.

Also, when troops are conducting pre-deployment exercises, you want to make sure public affairs builds media into the scenario. Having troops train to deal with media during exercises will prepare them better for the real thing. You may even work out an arrangement to have actual media members participate in the exercise so they know what to expect as an embedded reporter during a real deployment.

Deployment

Once you've been deployed into the theater of operations, training shouldn't stop. Remember to provide updates during Operations and Intelligence briefings about media opportunities that went well or did not go well in theater. Continually evaluate and provide better training to personnel based on the latest media analysis you and your staff gather.

Captain's Call/Commander's Call/Sensing Sessions are other opportunities where you can provide training during deployment operations.

Group training and briefings give you the "biggest bang for your buck" for reaching personnel. However, there are times when you will need to give one-on-one training.



When to Train Spokespersons/Subject Matter Experts



Generally, there are three times when you will train or prepare individuals before an interview:

- During professional development sessions
- Pre-deployment
- As reinforce prior to interviews

As we mentioned before, **preparing spokespersons** and SMEs is covered in another unit.

We have covered opportunities for training, so now let's talk about tools and resources that you can use to provide training.

Tools

The first tool you can use is presentations. These can be in any format you think makes the training interesting. They can be briefings that use Power Point, flip charts, handouts, etc. Each presentation, however, should contain the following information so your audience, individual and group understand the interview process.

- **Media role.** Explain to your spokesperson(s) the media's role to bring attention issues the public would be concerned with, not to tell the public what to think or how to feel about an issue.
- **Media relations** (explain benefits). Tell your spokesperson(s) the benefits of doing this interview. Explain that talking with reporters will:
 - Get our command messages/stories out
 - Educate general public
 - Keep families updated
- **Rules of engagement.** Explain to your spokesperson(s) the rules of engagement during the interview. Make sure he/she understands:
 - **You can decline** to answer any question you aren't prepared to answer
 - **"No Comment"** - is not an acceptable answer, avoid saying it
 - **Security considerations** - brief them about SAPP restrictions on the release of information
 - **Stay in your lane** – make sure they understand to talk about what they know, do not talk about what they do not know
 - **Command messages** – brief and provide them with what command message are and how to use them
 - **Tips** – make sure they are aware of interview tips and techniques

Tools

Troop Cards (Pocket Guide)

Your spokesperson(s) may not remember everything you tell them, especially if your training was done days, weeks or months in advance. Make sure you provide them with a reference they can use to remind them about everything you have told them. In general, the troop card is designed for spokespersons inexperienced in doing interviews. A few guidelines for troops cards are:

- They can be general in nature
- They can be tailored for a specific mission
- Topics can cover
 - Security guidance
 - Interview/Media Contact Tips
 - Advanced Interview Techniques (Messages/Bridging)
 - Command Messages

Below are examples of a troop cards. Troops cards are pocket sized and have information on the front and back of them.

[Troop Card 1](#)

[Troop Card 2](#)

[Troop Card 3](#)

Tools

Scenarios and Practical Exercises

Scenarios/practical exercises are an excellent tool to help prepare spokespersons to be ready for the media. If you are conducting periodic training or refresher training, you can develop scenarios to train your spokespersons or subject matter experts. **They add realism** to deployment training exercises and better prepares them for the real thing.

You and your staff can role-play the part of the media. Have your trainees prepare and conduct mock interviews with them. Play hardball with them. The tougher you are with them the more prepared they will be for the real thing. It will help everyone develop plans for responding to certain issues and validate their effectiveness.

Phase II Assignment

When you attend PAOQC-ADL-R at the Defense Information School (AKA Phase II) you will create a Troop Card for grade. The troop card will reflect a scenario that you'll receive during Phase II.

There is no assignment for PAOQC-ADL-NR (Phase I).

Unit Summary

Providing media training to personnel is vital to the success of any operation. Unity of effort is important and to have personnel properly trained and ready to talk with the media is an important element of that success. Perfect practice makes perfect performance.