



Media Training - Do you know what to say when the &#*+%#^ hits the fan?

Grant Ainsley is a media relations consultant and a guest on Practice Management Nuggets interview on March 27, 2014. Grant demonstrates how to develop key messages on any issue and how to use those messages effectively in interviews with the media to benefit any organization.

Media training is an important skill for your business spokesperson and critical for your success in managing a crisis. Preparing for a crisis is the best way to prevent a crisis. Your business should have a communications policy and privacy breach management procedures.

“Just one more service call before lunch,” thought Jake. Jake backed into a parking stall in front of the medical clinic at the strip mall. This was a regular monthly pick-up for the secure shredding company. Jake went into the clinic, introduced himself to the front desk and asked permission to access the office area so he could empty the shredding boxes. He emptied the bins into large plastic bags and put empty bags in the boxes for the next month’s collection.

Looking a little like Santa Clause carrying bags of Christmas toys, Jake carried the bags of paper to the front door. As he struggled to open the door against the extreme wind storm, the wind tunnel grabbed the bag of paper away from Jake. He caught the bag as it snagged on the corner of the door and ripped open the bag. The papers launched high into the air riding the gale force winds. “Oh, no!” groaned Jake. It would be a long time before a lunch break today.

The **communication policy** describes who speaks for the organization. This is often the owner or president or lead physician. It doesn't have to be, but typically, that's the best person to handle things like this. The communication policy also says who doesn't speak to the media, which means, basically, everybody else. It's their job to refer the media to where they can get comment from. You want to communicate in the way that is the most effective and the most responsible for your organization.

Here are practical steps that you can take when you have a privacy breach or another type of incident.

What is Grant's #1 Tip when preparing for a media interview? Don't worry.

Instead, follow the **3 Golden Rules**:

1. Know what you are going to say before you say it
2. Talk about what you want to talk about; know your key messages
3. Stay on message

Understand the situation thoroughly. Get as much information inside your head as possible – be sure about the key details like names, dates, facts, and figures.

Key messages are the things that you want to talk about during an interview. Identify the two or three important things that you want the audience to remember after the interview. The interview is usually short so select the few important messages on the topic. Create a power statement – one complete sentence that highlights the two or three things that you want to say. Develop a couple of short statements that supports your power statement. These are typically positive statement but they could be information. Write down the key messages and get some feedback from someone else in your business. If this is a bad news situation, you might want to contact a media consultant or other advisor to help you prepare your key messages.

Prepare not to be sidetracked from your key messages. There might be certain places that you're not going to go. For example, you are not going to comment about other people's reactions to the incident or guess what might have caused the accident.

These three golden rules to prepare for your media interview are the same if you have bad news or good news. Maybe you're just opening a new clinic and you want to approach the media with your publicity. The same rules apply - get all the information into your head, develop your key messages, and stay on message.

Ace the interview

Practice for the media interview. Rehearse your key messages including speaking them out loud. Have someone play the role of the interviewer. Ideally, you want to be able to know your key messages well enough that you don't need to have notes in your hand.

"The number one mistake that most people make" says Ainsley, "especially with television reporters, is they don't have enough eye contact. It's really important to have that eye contact with the reporter. Eye contact shows trust, conviction, confidence, truthfulness." Another tip is to put your hands at your sides and stand when you speak with the reporter. Standing gives the appearance that you have more confidence in your message.

Grant also speaks about using ROR format to deliver your key messages. The first R is responsibility and remorse, if any remorse needs to be shown. O stands for organized. Be organized to face the media, be organized with your key messages. A lot of people run from the media; instead, be prepared and involved in how the media reports the story. The final thing is to be Real. People want you to be real. Take responsibility – acknowledge the incident and be responsive.

Jake dashes into the clinic and asks for the clinic's help to gather up all the papers flying around in the parking lot. After, Jake makes sure that both his boss and the clinic manager and clinic privacy officer know what has happened.

The clinic manager informs the lead physician and owners and then prepares the privacy breach report. It will take some time to figure out which patients may need to be notified of the breach. In the meantime, the clinic manager prepares the key messages for any questions from the media or the public.

There has been a privacy breach at our clinic. At our clinic, we have a secure shredding program in place to protect the privacy of our patient's information. Unfortunately, when transporting the paper from the clinic to the shredding vendor's truck immediately outside the clinic, there was an accident that spilled the papers and the gale force wind storm caused the papers to be blown away. We have retrieved some of the papers and it is likely that there are other papers which we have not retrieved. We are trying to assess which individuals might be risk. We have contacted the Privacy Commissioner's office. If you think that you might be affected by this breach or have any questions, please contact our privacy officer.

The clinic manager prepared to circulate the key messages to all the staff and speak with the front office staff personally. "If anyone has any questions about this," she says "take their name and phone number and tell them that the privacy officer will return their call."

Media training is a key step to implement your communications policy and privacy breach management. I think most of the time people acknowledge that we are each human and that mistakes will happen from time to time, but it's our response to those mistakes that is our opportunity to make a bad news situation a positive message. A privacy breach is probably not going to be as bad as you think that it is, but it's going to be a good lesson, and it's something that you probably never want to go through again.

Make sure that your communications spokesperson is prepared to speak with the media.

Learn How to Deal With the Media With Grant Ainsley <http://grantainsley.com/>

Award winning journalist, speaker and media trainer Grant Ainsley offers his media relations training.

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Document Management Tip – Privacy Breach Management Report Form
<http://informationmanagers.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/DT-Privacy-Breach-Mngmt-2012May.pdf>

Practice Management Nugget interview March 27, 2014 with Grant Ainsley. Good News, Bad News. How to talk with the Media.

Contact Us

Jean L. Eaton, B Admin, CHIM, CC
The Practical Privacy Coach and Practice Management Mentor
author of the forthcoming books, "Privacy Breach Management Resource Package" and "Practice Management: Easy to Follow Steps to Start a New Clinic and Improve Your Established Clinic".
INFORMATION MANAGERS LTD.
Cell: 780.237.7605
Fax: 1.866.655.7780

<http://www.informationmanagers.ca>
Email: jean@informationmanagers.ca

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