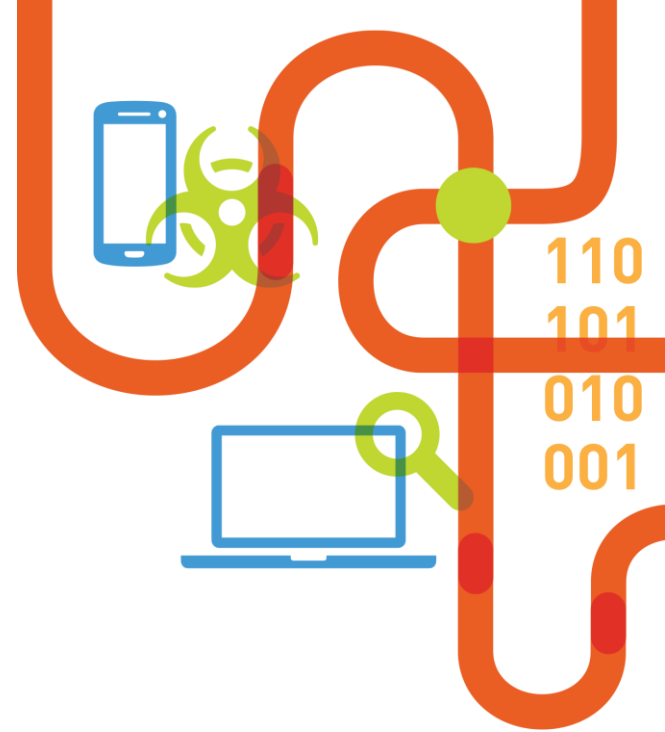


RAPID7

MEDIA TRAINING

Jen Ellis



Licensing

This presentation is licensed for use under the Creative Commons BY 4.0 license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Agenda

- Introduction to Media
- Delivering value
- Brilliant briefings
- After the briefing

INTRODUCTION TO MEDIA

A Day in the Life of a Reporter...

- The average online news reporter receives 200+ emails a day, the vast majority of which are pitches/press releases.
 - It's likely half of these will not be fully read
 - Most reporters use filters to manage their inboxes
- Online news reporters typically write 3-5 pieces per week (many write less)
 - Most source story ideas from wires, social media, previous conversations
 - The story for the day will be chosen by 9am ET and filed by 12noon ET – you have to move fast to be included
- All this means competition is fierce and you need to get your approach right and build relationships

Do Your Research

There are a lot of reporters that focus on security. Before you approach them, do your research:

- What kind of audience do they write for? Security professionals? General IT? Business leaders? Consumers?
- What kind of people do they typically quote?
- Do they usual get into the deep details, or do they stay high level?
- Do they use a lot of jargon, or keep their language simple?
- Do they have a particular point of view, eg. a political stance, pro-privacy, anti-corporation etc.?



Relationships are key

Reporters will come back to you time and again if you deliver value.

- Do your homework – know what the reporter covers, how technical they go, what their title covers, who their readers are
- Follow them and interact with them on social networks, read their articles
- Treat everyone with respect, before, during and after
- Don't dismiss press because of who they write for
- Don't be inauthentic or try to play them

Different Types of News Opportunities

Proactive (your news)

- Build in time for the media in your process
- Build the story, make it clear
- Know your details. Keep it factual.

Reactive (3rd party news)

- Be FAST (30 mins)
- How can you add value to what's already out there?
- Be relatively brief in your initial pitch

DELIVERING VALUE

Avoid Getting Lost in Translation

- Build a story that highlights IMPACT/ SIGNIFICANCE. Make it relevant.
- Do not expect media to be experts. Even if they are, their readers may not be.
- Avoid jargon and industry-insider knowledge
- Be crisp on the details, and get your facts straight in advance
- You need to TRANSLATE

Creating Written Comment

Think about it in terms of how the quote can be used:

- Take a stance.
- Keep it brief and manageable. Don't meander or take forever to get to your point.
- The flip side is don't go too short. Even if you're responding to questions from a reporter, do not provide single word answers, unless you are intentionally doing it for effect.
- Don't suddenly become overly formal. Provide written commentary that sounds like you do when you speak.

Building the Message

- When building the story, ask yourself:
 - Is this relevant? How?
 - Is this significant? How
 - Is this accurate? How?
- Focus on who is impacted, what the impact is, and **WHAT ACTION NEEDS TO BE TAKEN**
- Incorporate proof points – stats, 3rd party support. Do you have suggestions of who else they can speak to?
- Speak to the broader context

BRILLIANT BRIEFINGS



Phrasing!

Media Briefings - Dos

- Do be honest!
- Do know your story – what is your core message? What is the key take away. Do keep it simple.
- Do avoid jargon as much as possible. Use simple, common language.
- Do start at a high level and give the reporter an opportunity to dig in to get more details.
- Do reiterate it to be clear. Do bring your points back to it.

Media Briefings – Dos (cont.)

- Do use analogies or examples to make it easy to understand, but use good judgment on what.
- Do focus on positive statements where you can, rather than negative ones.
- Do give them time to catch up and ask questions (this is particularly key on the phone and if they're taking notes)
- Do be aware of your body language in F2F meetings
- Do stay on topic – if a conversation starts to meander or rabbit hole, you can either bridge or suggest a follow up call.

Bridging

- When a reporter asks you a question you don't want to answer, or it's slightly off-topic, you can “bridge” back to your point.
- You do this by starting with their question and then identifying an association that enables you to walk them back to the point you actually want to make.
- Be careful to avoid seeming evasive

Media Briefings – Don'ts

- Don't get drawn into sensationalism and speculation. Stick to what you know
- Don't be afraid of silence
- Don't feel pressured to answer questions
 - But understand what “No comment” really means
 - You can tell people you will look into it and come back to them.
- Don't go “Off the record”

On or Off the Record?

- “On the record” means anything you say can be quoted and attributed to you.
 - This is the default setting for any media interaction
- “Off the record” means nothing you say can be quoted or attributed to you.
 - Avoid this unless you know the reporter well
 - If you do need to go off the record (try not to) – state it and get agreement before saying whatever it you want to share. You cannot apply it retroactively!
- “On background” means a reporter can use what you have told them **WITHOUT** attributing it to you.

Tricky Tactics

Some reporters have a number of “techniques” they use, you need to be able to recognize and handle them:

- **Machine gunning** – firing lots of questions at you at once
- **Posing as your best friend** – this is common in the security space where people frequently socialize at events. Most reporters in this community are genuine and care about security, but never forget they are a reporter
- **Interrupting** – as it sounds – designed to fluster you
- **Paraphrasing** – trying to put words in your mouth
- **Dart throwing** – firing controversial statements at you to see what reaction they can get
- **Silence** – no one can resist filling in the silence! Be strong!

Sidestepping and Blocking

- Don't be defensive or evasive. Try to say “and” instead of “but”
- “we take a slightly different approach to that..”
- “I think the question here really is...”
- “we take people's concerns very seriously and...”
- “I'd be happy to look into that for you and come back to you...”

The Freebie!

- Many reporters will ask you at the end of the meeting or call whether you have anything to add. Don't waste this opportunity! You can use it in a number of ways (pick one):
 - Reiterate your central point one more time
 - Share an important Call to Action
 - Add something that you didn't have a chance to get to, but you think is central to the story
 - Offer further assistance on other stories

AFTER THE BRIEFING

Before the Article Comes Out

- Don't expect to see the copy or approve/ edit it before it goes to print
- Do follow up if you said you would. Agree timelines in advance with the reporter and be sensitive to them.

After the Article Comes Out

- Share the link through your social networks and reference the reporter
- Take note of who covered it and who didn't and learn from it
- Take note of which comments were used and adapt your style based on that
- Maintain a positive tone and stay professional – if you are unhappy, do not throw the reporter under the bus

Be Prepared!

- At some point, it is inevitable that you will be unhappy with how your commentary comes out. You can minimize this, but you cannot completely eliminate it. What defines you is how you respond.
 - Be graceful, don't get defensive
 - If something is specifically factually inaccurate, notify the reporter and politely ask them to change it. If the fault is on your side (even if it lies with the PR team), apologize, don't air dirty laundry.

Stay Classy



KEY TAKEAWAYS

There is a lot to remember, so to keep it simple, my 5 top tips for any briefing are:

- **Do be friendly, courteous and HONEST!** This one speaks for itself.
- **Focus on your core take aways** and keep bringing the discussion back to them. Positive reinforcement in messaging is good!
- **Do keep it simple.** Start basic and build up. That said, don't be afraid to answer more detailed questions or get into the technical nitty gritty if you feel the journalist or analyst is following.
- **Don't feel pressured to answer questions.** It's OK to say "We'll look into that and come back to you" or "That's not really something I can comment on." That said; try to avoid sounding cagey or defensive. **Don't say "No comment"!**
- **There is no such thing as "off the record".** Discretion is the better part of valor!