
Interacting with the News Media During Litigation

A year and a half after a young engineer died from an accidental fall at an industrial plant, his employer predictably found itself in litigation because of the accident. While the company's attorney was responsible for prepping several employees who most likely would be deposed during the trial, [The Ammerman Experience](#) conducted a half-day training session with those employees – preparing them for likely encounters with the news media. For example, reporters covering the trial might approach one or more of these employees in the hall during a break, or might seek a comment from them at the end of a day.

Our approach to this assignment focused on several skills:

- Because all of these employees had previously gone through one of our [media training workshops](#), we quickly reviewed the essential skills needed for a successful encounter with a reporter.
- We showed several video examples of individuals successfully and unsuccessfully handling “ambush” encounters with the news media.
- After conducting a brief tutorial on the proper way to handle an ambush, we had each participant practice politely declining an interview request – several times . . . on camera.
- We conducted a rapid-fire, “hot seat” exercise where we asked a variety of questions designed to test the participants’ ability to handle tough questions, “bridge” to their key messages, and spot potential “traps.”
- In the event that the company would want these individuals to respond to media inquiries during the trial, we recorded and critiqued them practicing their answers and messages in a simulated media interview.