

Evaluating Training Providers

A number of companies and individuals offer media training. Some are PR firms that provide their clients with media relations services such as news release writing and media placement. Others are former journalists or corporate media relations specialists. Selecting the right media trainer involves some work. Here are some questions to ask when evaluating and selecting a firm that provides media or other communications training:

- How long has the firm been in business? Is training a "sideline" for the company or its primary business?
- Is the firm willing to furnish references?
- Does the firm ensure confidentiality in all its dealings with you (including identifying you as a client)?
- Does the firm offer customized training or merely a standard package of existing workshops?
- How many participants are there in each workshop? How much time is devoted to lecture vs. learning by doing? How many on-camera exercises does each participant take part in? Are the number and length of breaks appropriate?
- Is the firm a "one-man show," or does it have a staff that can handle multiple assignments? What are the backgrounds of the staff (both instructors and role players)?
- Are media interviews conducted by former journalists with actual reporting experience? Are any of the role players currently working as reporters (something that could compromise confidentiality)?
- How does the firm prepare for each session? What type of information does it request from the client? What kind of independent research does it conduct?
- How much feedback does each participant receive about his or her performance?
- What kind of written materials do participants receive?
- Does the firm have a track record of successfully handling international assignments?
- Does the firm have a TV studio where participants can obtain real-world studio experience, if needed?
- Has the firm's media training kept up with the times, and does it address such things as social media, remote interviews, etc.?
- Does the firm offer 24/7 support when necessary during a crisis or prior to an interview or presentation? Is there a fee for that support?
- At the end of a workshop, are participants given the opportunity to evaluate the session? Are those evaluations shared with the individual who arranged for the training?
- Are there any hidden fees (equipment costs, travel expense mark-ups, etc.)?
- What are the firm's cancellation policies?