

Our Approach to Media Training

Overview: Geoffrey Knox & Associates (GKA) structures its trainings so participants develop their skills in a supportive environment. We are sensitive to local community, state, and national context and the specific goals of groups and individuals involved. We train individual leaders and small groups on how to maximize their effectiveness in print, TV, and radio interviews.

We recently adapted our in-person training model to the virtual world. We experimented with technology and can now tape and playback role plays on Zoom and achieve much the same learning as before. Since most interviews are via online platforms these days, it's proving quite useful. Our new Zoom Tip Sheet is popular and new and seasoned spokespeople we've trained recently are sharing great results.

Understanding Fears and Fundamentals: We start by discussing participants' past experiences and present concerns about interviews. In small groups, participants discover they are not alone in fears about what they might say or how they might appear. For individual leaders with experience, we fine-tune and hone skills for particularly challenging settings. We always offer practical tips to try out in training role-plays and later in real life interviews.

We focus on target audiences and key messages so that participants can think strategically about using each interview as a way to reach out and educate specific audiences. We explore how messages can be tailored for each audience and responsive to current events.

Realistic Role-Plays: The core of our approach is using role-plays to practice different types of interviews. Role-plays are tailored to be as realistic as possible, based on topics and situations participants tell us they have experienced or are likely to face in interviews. Based on their input, we will create a series of print, TV, and radio interview role plays to be filmed.

Relevant and Personalized Scenarios: We consult in advance to ensure each participant is assigned scenarios relevant to their expertise and issue area. We use upcoming events, newsworthy reports, or advocacy/policy campaigns so the training can be applied to a real-life situation. We determine difficult questions a reporter might ask so participants can practice how to best respond.

In each media interview, GKA and partners will play reporters, using a variety of interview techniques, to try and get a good quote for a story. Our cameraman films each short role-play and we immediately provide critique during playback on the Zoom screen. Other participants offer feedback as well, but we ensure all comments are constructive and useful to the trainee.

Preparation: We send out a short questionnaire to each participant two weeks in advance. Questions focus on past experiences with media interviews, what audiences and messages are important to them, and individual goals. Confidential responses to GKA help us learn about individual needs and determine each participant's interview topics in advance so we can do background research on the issues and prepare realistic questions a reporter might ask.