



# Media Relations

A Toolkit for Financial Services Executives



# Media Relations

This toolkit is intended to help financial services executives become more adept at working with industry and national media. It includes tips for how to establish and maintain relationships with journalists, prepare for interviews, address hard questions and provide quotable responses.



# Doing Media Outreach is a Win-Win-Win

## Media coverage benefits you and your firm.

Bylined articles, profile stories, quotes or mentions in a respected publication can:

- Draw new audiences into the marketing funnel, accelerating sales.
- Reinforce your value to existing clients, supporting retention and referrals.
- Make it easier for people to find you online, improving website SEO.
- Improve company reputation, strengthening recruitment efforts.

Unlike paid advertising, citations in respected publications build credibility in your expertise, and position you as a knowledgeable and trusted professional.

## Your financial knowledge is an asset to journalists.

They seek sources – especially those in their local areas – to help them:

- Put recent financial news and market movements in context.
- Explain complex tax policy changes and regulatory updates.
- Provide actionable financial planning advice.

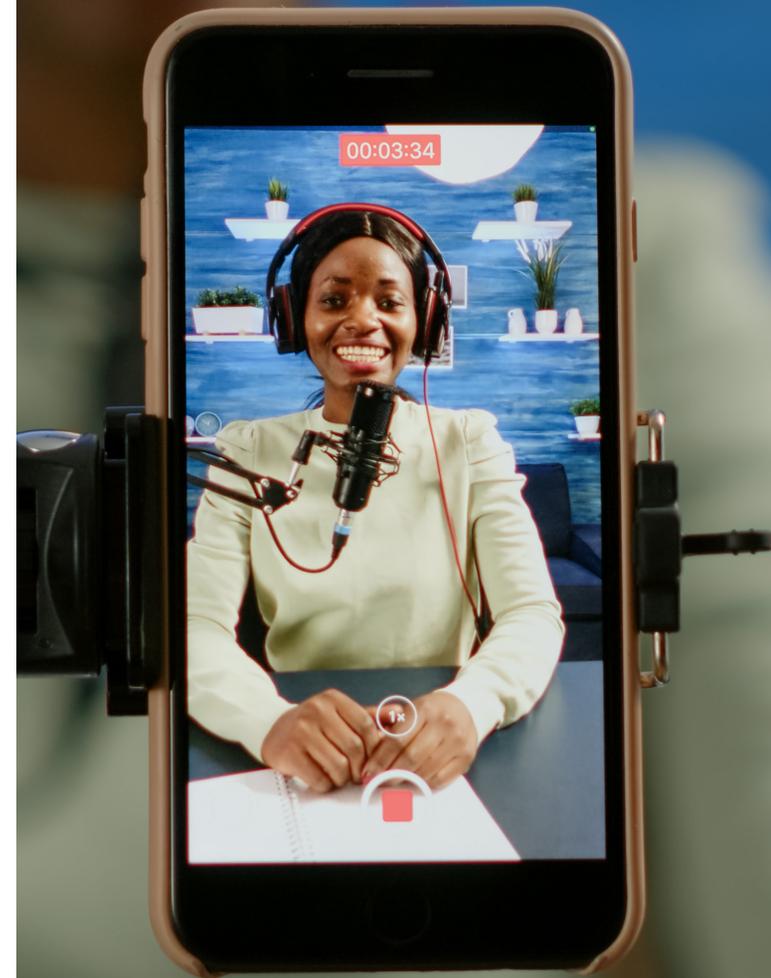
Citations in respected publications build credibility in your expertise.



# Become a Media Source

The first step to becoming a go-to source for the media is to get on their radar.

- **Be targeted:** Identify the publications and journalists that cover the topics you want to speak about, and whose readers align with your target audiences.
- **Leverage memberships:** Add yourself to the list of media sources that may be maintained by industry organizations you belong to, e.g. CPA society.
- **Bump elbows:** Meet and network with reporters at press events and industry conferences.
- **Make your intro:** Reach out to introduce yourself and offer to be a source on your area of expertise. Provide your bio and a sample of your thought-leadership.
- **Get socially engaged:** Follow reporters on social media (especially Twitter) to stay up to date on what topics they are focused on and when they are seeking sources.
- **Show your worth:** Proactively offer insights or content they might find valuable. Examples might include commentary on the market or recent news, a summary of new legislation, year-end tax guidance, research or surveys.
- **Share your stories:** Periodically send press releases about awards, new hires, milestones and other company news.



# Get Familiar with the Media

A successful working relationship with the media depends on understanding their expertise and how their objectives differ from yours.

## Who journalists are:

- **Smart and curious.** They are generally well educated, but don't have an in-depth understanding of investing and financial planning.
- **Conscientious.** They want to do good work, and feel accountable to readers for any mistakes.
- **Skeptical.** They don't want to be sold.
- **Questioning.** They identify as watch-dogs for the public, and a check on business and politics.
- **Competitive.** They want to beat their peer to the story.

## Journalists need/want:

- Accessible information that's easy to understand and, in turn, explain to readers
- To tell a good, accurate and truthful story (not sell your product)
- A unique perspective, a different point of view, something they can't get somewhere else
- Prompt responses to inquiries
- First, and exclusive, access to the story

**Journalists want to tell a good story, not sell your product.**



# Before the Interview

## Do some homework

- Research the journalist and the show/ publication.
  - Read some recent articles or watch/listen to previous segments.
  - Understand what they cover, and what they don't.
- Understand the focus and format of the interview.
  - Ask what they are writing about.
  - Ask what types of questions that they will ask.
  - Ask what other sources they are interviewing for the piece.
  - Ask about timetable, and respect these deadlines.

## Clarify details and ground rules

- Be explicit about what is and isn't your area of expertise, what you can and can't talk about.
- Confirm logistics details:
  - Day, time and duration
  - If applicable: Phone numbers, and who will initiate the call
  - Include in the calendar invitation:
    - The conference bridge line or video conference link
    - Your name and contact information
    - Your title, and the name of your organization
    - A link to your bio and any other materials that would help the journalist prepare



# Know Your Subject Matter

Although you can't tell the reporter what to write, you can help ensure your quotes are accurate and on message by consistently presenting a limited number of clear and quotable points.

## Develop your message

- **Prepare:** You'll likely get only a couple of quotes, so take some time to think about what you want them to be.
- **Prioritize:** Identify the two or three (at most) compelling and salient messages.
- **Wordsmith:** Have ready an analogy, metaphor, rhyming one-liner or even a cliché that concisely and memorably conveys a point.
- **Get personal:** Prepare a story of a personal experience to drive home your point in human terms.
- **Cite an expert:** Share anecdotes from a quotable well-known authority on the subject, e.g. Warren Buffet.
- **Practice:** Rehearsing in front of a colleague or a mirror can help you avoid getting nervous/ uncomfortable and wandering off message.

## Stay on message

- Use each question as an opportunity to bridge to your message(s).
- Flag your key points, e.g: "The key thing is..." "The most important thing for people to understand is..."
- Acknowledge and briefly answer off-topic questions, then come back to a key point.
- Avoid saying "no comment."
- Deflect challenging questions with "I may not be the best person to answer," or "I might need to take a pass on that, it's not my area of expertise."
- Reiterate your key points at the end.

Ensure your quotes are accurate and on message.



# Maintain a Positive Image

## Avoid Pitfalls

- Be conscious of eye contact, posture and body language on TV.
- Speak in short sentences, and avoid rambling and industry jargon.
- Don't repeat a negative comment or something you don't agree with.
- Don't show anger, even if offended.
- Don't be condescending. If a reporter gets something wrong, simply clarify the point.
- Assume every interview is "on the record." If you don't want it attributed to you, don't say it.
- Request "off the record" only very judiciously to avoid appearing uncooperative.
- Stick to your ground rules about what topics you'll discuss.

## Know when to say no

Not all press is good press. It may make sense to decline an interview request in certain circumstances:

- A topic you aren't an expert on
- An intended conclusion or point of view you disagree with
- A negative story about a competitor or client
- Compliance limitations
- Persistently negative coverage by the journalist
- Unproductive past experiences with the journalist
  - Misquotes that weren't addressed/corrected
  - Time-consuming interactions that didn't result in a quote



## After the Interview

- Ask when the story is expected to run, but don't ask to review it in advance.
- Be responsive to fact-checking inquiries.
- Look out for the piece and review it.
- Contact the journalist to thank them, provide feedback and correct any inaccuracies.
- Leverage the media coverage.
  - Post a link on your website.
  - Get permission and make reprints.
  - Email/send it to clients.
  - Post to your company's and your personal social media accounts.

Remember to thank the journalist and provide feedback.

Lowe Group offers media training as well as assistance with setting up a media relations program.

For more information, please visit [lowecom.com](http://lowecom.com) or call us at (414)777-1880.

