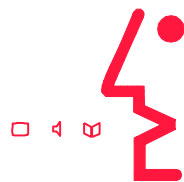


# *The Lasting Effects of Media Training*

## *Lifelong Learning or Temporary Phenomenon?*

### *Executive Summary*

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# Executive Summary

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Allow me to begin by speaking heresy to many involved with media training. The fact is a single media training workshop, in and of itself, is of relatively little long-term value. Rather, it is the results that media training helps to achieve – a shinier brand, a promotion on the job, victory before lawmakers and regulators – that matter.

Every CEO who signs off on media training for her or his organization wants to ensure those training efforts result in long-term business success.

Here's even more sacrilege: Much media training as practiced today is largely ineffective. Why? Many workshops fail to provide a plan for continued long-term business and career success. Furthermore, they neglect to address return on investment (ROI), both for trainees individually and for their organizations.

What action can media training consultants, internal communicators, and training participants take to achieve more positive and long-lasting results? All parties are encouraged to maximize the return on their media training investment by making use of the best practice recommendations outlined in this report, taking heed of those suggestions that best fit their situation. These steps can include anything from additional formal refresher workshops to creative telephone consultations to suggesting exercises trainees can do independently.

Even among organizations that tip their caps to long-range professional and organizational goals, implementing any plan remains difficult: Participants are often left with little if any guidance. Their ongoing learning suffers, falling victim to a lack of direction and to other factors such as day-to-day professional and business demands, and diminishing motivation over time.

As one interviewee put it, "Everyone is pumped up at the end of the session saying how wonderful it was," but the energy or follow through "falls by the wayside later." The recommendations suggested in this report are designed to take advantage of the enthusiasm at the end of a workshop, and prevent that energy from dissipating.

In the typical media training environment as it has come to develop, participants are often subjected to a single "one-off" session in which they are expected to learn

everything in that instant. Legitimate attempts at learning how better to work with reporters are too often the exception, not the rule.

While a single “just in time” workshop will no doubt do an executive or spokesperson some good, one will not get noticeably better at the craft without ongoing practice. In the words of one respondent interviewed during the research for this report, it should become “an evolution of their skills.”

This hypothesis that too many media training workshops are ineffective due to a lack of emphasis on lifelong learning resulted in discovery of four philosophical categories that media training consultants and internal communicators hold:

1. **The Mover and Shaker:** Expresses frustration with the lack of leveraging public relations for long-term business success, and takes action to improve the situation.
2. **The Quitter:** Realizes it is difficult to inculcate lifelong learning, and throws his hands up believing there is nothing anyone can do to make it happen.
3. **The Carefree Soul:** Recognizes it is difficult to instill lifelong learning, and is not bothered by it. In fact, he prefers one-off relationships with no follow up.
4. **The Know Nothing:** Consists of low-skill “trainers” in the marketplace, often public relations generalists moonlighting as training consultants. These individuals may not even realize the situation exists.

This report examines the attitudes and methods of the three main groups with a stake in media training:

1. Media training consultants
2. Internal communicators
3. Media training participants

The author hopes this research contributes to the knowledge of each of these three groups, helping them gain real value from their media training efforts. Improving the lot of even a few organizations will serve a worthy purpose, assuming it leads to constructive change in how consultants and internal communicators approach such learning opportunities. Even a small attitude shift can help advance the long-term business success of organizations and the career paths of spokespeople.

## About the Author

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Ed Barks works with executives who want to ensure their media training efforts result in long-term business success, and with subject matter experts who want to enhance their career paths.

He wrote the book about verbal and nonverbal communications, [\*The Truth About Public Speaking: The Three Keys to Great Presentations\*](#), and the training guide, *Face the Press with Confidence: The Media Interview Companion*.

Ed contributes to leading industry journals and is the former “Speaking Sense” columnist for the *Washington Business Journal*. He has published numerous additional works such as “A Buyer’s Guide to Communications Training Consultants,” “How Important Are Nonverbal Signals?” and “Maximize Your Next Media Training: Best Practice Standards.” He also authored the research report, “Can We Talk Off the Record? Resolving Disagreements, Increasing Understanding Between Reporters and Public Relations Practitioners.”

Ed has taught more than 3500 business leaders, association executives, physicians, scientists, government officials, athletes, entertainers, non-profit executives, and public relations staff.

His clients say he “knows how to elicit peak performance.” They call him “a master at connecting with his audience” and “an effective educator,” and give his communications training workshops “two thumbs up!”

He has served as President of Barks Communications since its founding in 1997. He also holds several volunteer leadership roles including service on the Board of Governors of the National Press Club and the Consultants Section Council of the American Society of Association Executives’ (ASAE), and served on the faculty of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Organization Management.

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*Individual copies of the full report, “The Lasting Effects of Media Training: Lifelong Learning or Temporary Phenomenon?” are available for \$19.95 from Barks Communications at (540) 955-0600.*

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