

Business Focus: PR

Becoming A Media Spokesperson to Unlock Business Potential

You may feel that becoming a media spokesperson is either unachievable or not desirable for your particular business. In fact, becoming a credible, trusted spokesperson is well within your reach and will also bring a halo effect to your business by driving awareness, trust and engagement among your target audiences.

Spokespeople enjoy increased visibility and credibility, using the media as an engaging platform to highlight their ideas and insights. This article gives you 10 practical, step-by-step pointers for how to become a spokesperson and leverage this to benefit your business.

1. Model Yourself on the Experts

Think about those spokespeople you admire and make their characteristics the foundation for your own spokesperson brand:

- ✓ **Independent and credible:** This particularly relates to relationships with pharma companies, suppliers and manufacturers. Always disclose any paid relationships – journalists need to know your opinions are your own and they are not being fed corporate positioning
- ✓ **Knowledgeable:** Your training and years of experience are what journalists want to see
- ✓ **Professional:** Keep a calm, collected approach in the face of divided opinions – never get drawn into speculation or a ‘gossiping’ style
- ✓ **Instantly quotable:** Drill complex issues down to interesting ‘soundbites’ – messages that hold the audience’s attention and get to the point quickly and effectively

2. Identify Your Strengths & Target Media

Are you good at translating scientific advances into layman’s terms?

Do you enjoy outlining complex points of medical practice or providing clear counsel in the face of an industry crisis?

Begin by identifying your strengths alongside your own personal goals for being a spokesperson and consider what type of media provides you with the best opportunities to achieve these goals.

This may be 'consumer' press, such as women's magazines, newspapers, TV and radio or more industry-focused trade journals, medical publications and online portals.

3. Invest in Media Training

If talking to the media is going to be a regular activity, I strongly recommend investing in some professional media training.

A specialist trainer will come in and work with you for a day to help you develop the skills and techniques you need: nobody starts off feeling completely comfortable talking to journalists; this is achieved via specific techniques, a solid understanding of how media work and lots of practice!

Training is essential to help build and adapt your style, allowing you to better anticipate what media are looking for and how to cope under pressure.

4. Investigate Industry Partnerships

If you have strong relationships with a particular company (such as a pharma/device company or manufacturer) you may wish to reach out to them for help and support in finding spokesperson opportunities. They may offer to provide media training in return for pointing interview opportunities your way – just remember the points about credibility and transparency and ensure you strike a balance between giving your professional opinion versus promoting particular products, services or companies

5. Reach Out To Target Media

Start by calling specific reporters in your target media category and introduce yourself with a few specific suggestions about stories or angles on which you are qualified to offer expert opinion. **The more specific your suggestion, the better.**

Pay attention to who has been writing about what and include this information in your call – you are more likely to get a positive reception if the journalist feels you have taken the time to familiarise yourself with what they have written about. Your ultimate aim is to introduce yourself and get on the reporters' contact list as an expert source to be called at the next opportunity.

6. Be Contactable!

If you're going to interact with the media, you'll have to expect short-notice requests and ever-changing deadlines: it is essential to be contactable for that all-important interview request. You might have the most expertise on a given topic, but if you're not accessible to reporters on deadline, you won't be called next time!

7. Resist the Rumour Mill

Credibility and trust are central to the success of any spokesperson so resist the temptation, even when pushed, to speculate or comment on a rumour. Instead, offer the reporter some alternatives such as other ways of finding the information so you continue to prove your value as a source.

Also, **never mention client names, even celebrities!** Besides betraying doctor-patient confidentiality and trust, this can land you in serious legal trouble.

Finally, don't lie to a reporter or stretch the truth—ever. Nothing is more important to a reporter than their reputation, because this means job security. Damage their credibility and you won't get a second chance to become a source.

8. Mention Your Business Within your Quote

You can do this in a credible (not promotional) way by mentioning the clinic as part of a relevant example in your interview. Direct the audience to your clinic experiences, trends you have seen in clinical practice, treatments you offer, regulations you follow.

Keep these to one or two mentions per interview – if you constantly refer back to yourself it will appear promotional and reduce your credibility.

Always ensure the journalist includes your name, title and clinic alongside your quote – this is an easy win for more visibility and awareness!

9. Cascade Spokesperson Success Across Channels

Along the lines of 'build it and they will come' – if you talk about yourself as a spokesperson and profile your recent examples, more opportunities are likely to start coming through! Easy ways to do this are to:

- **Update your website** – add an 'as seen in' page with coverage examples or media logos
- **Maximise your waiting room** with 'as seen in' examples in display frames and coffee table
- **Twitter Signposting** – alert your followers to upcoming coverage, or thank a journalist for a recent interview. Don't forget to include the media outlet or journalist twitter handle in your tweet - hopefully, they will retweet your comment thus raising your visibility among their followers as well

10. Capture Those New Leads!

There is no point in becoming a spokesperson and driving awareness of your business, if you are not optimised to capture any new leads which come through.

Make sure everything about your business is poised to capture and maximise the results of spokesperson activities - from your front desk staff, to the clinic materials, website, social media platforms and most of all – feedback from your patients!

Next time: How to Write Compelling Press Releases



Julia Kendrick
Kendrick PR Consulting Ltd

Julia Kendrick is an award-winning communicator specialising in medical aesthetic and consumer health PR. As the founder of Kendrick PR, she uses her 11 years of expertise to help brands, clinics and practitioners harness the power of PR, delivering tangible, high-impact business results. Julia also works as a core member of the elite Aesthetic Business Experts Network; an industry service team hand-selected for their expertise, passion and top-class client delivery. A regular aesthetics media contributor, speaker and trainer, Julia also supports

Facing the World, a charity founded by UK cranio-facial surgeons which gives deprived children the miracle of a new face and a life free from the stigma of deformity.

Web: www.kendrickpr.uk | **Email:** julia@kendrickpr.uk | **Twitter:** @JRKendrick | **Tel:** 07890 711 037