

# BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS BY TALKING TO THE MEDIA

---

## WHY SHOULD I TALK TO THE MEDIA?

---

Communicating your message through the media may provide you with a cost-effective way of reaching your existing and potential clients. As with any medium, there are advantages and disadvantages.

### The upside:

- Telling your story through the media is cost-effective. It will only cost you the time to prepare and pitch your story. Editors and producers are hungry for compelling news to fill their pages and airwaves.
- The news media can also help validate your assertions. Readers and viewers recognize that reporters are required to check their facts.

You appear more reliable when a reporter has already assessed your credibility and perhaps even had other sources back your claims.

### So what's the downside?

- Once you are interviewed, you have no control over the final product. You also won't see an article before it goes to print. Because a reporter is obligated to tell both sides of a story, it's possible your message may get diluted. However, as long as your message is properly conveyed, it should still resonate.

---

## YOUR FIRST THREE STEPS TO WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

---

### 1. DETERMINE YOUR AUDIENCE AND MEDIA TARGET

**How do I reach out to the press?** First, determine your audience. What is your desired client base reading and watching? Then decide which of these media you'd like to target.

Most likely, your potential clients live within a certain region, so look for opportunities within those communities. Most local newspapers have personal finance sections or columns. Likewise, most local TV and radio news programs have a business segment.

**Who do I contact and how?** Contact names and numbers are often listed on the masthead, which is usually found next to the table of contents or on the editorial page of any publication. At a minimum, you should find a general phone number here. Additionally, most news outlets have Web sites that list their contact details.

Look for an assignment editor or a news editor. This person will either direct you to the right reporter or listen to your pitch and assign a reporter who will call you back.

Alternatively, if you know of a reporter who typically covers the kind of story you're pitching, try contacting him or her directly. In this case, be sure you read or watch the reporter's work before calling. They are busy, so don't waste their time and be certain your story is in line with the kind of news they report.

### 2. DECIDE ON YOUR APPROACH

**Pitch a Story.** This is the most common approach. News sniffs out reporters more often than reporters sniff out news. You can sell your story to a reporter by offering an angle and making it relevant.

**Stories that could potentially interest editors and reporters include:**

- A new product or service you may be providing
- Offering yourself to reporters as a local expert on investing and the economy
- Stories on how world news can affect local investors

An angle is a unique perspective or spin to the story. Even the most straightforward news reports have some sort of angle. Tell the reporter what you think is new or different about what you have to say. The right angle on a story can make all the difference, so try to come up with your own before the reporter picks one you don't like.

Your success is almost certain if you make your pitch relevant to the reporter and their audience. Do your homework. Read or watch your target paper or program regularly to understand their audience. Deliver your pitch by reinforcing what their readers need to know about your story.

If the reporter chooses to run with the story (and they may not), set up an interview at a later time and be prepared.

**Submit an Article.** Local news outlets are often hungry for content and don't always have the budget for a full editorial staff. As a result, they often pay news services for syndicated content. Therefore, they're often willing to publish an article from a professional in the community. Keep in mind the paper has final editorial authority and can make any changes they choose. You may also consider submitting a letter to the editor.

### 3. CRAFT YOUR MESSAGE

Be prepared and keep it simple. Determine the top two or three key points that you'd like to convey and summarize each into one clean sentence. Leading media trainer Virgil Scudder calls these your "must air" points. On the other side of this sheet, you'll find Virgil Scudder's guidelines for crafting your message and navigating through an interview.

# BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS BY TALKING TO THE MEDIA

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

1. **PREPARATION** is the key to success in any interview situation. Prepare your agenda thoroughly before the interview begins.
2. **BE RESPONSIVE BUT STEER** the interview to your key topics. You have a right to state your points – and restate them.
3. **TAKE CONTROL** of the interview at your earliest opportunity. You never do an interview to answer questions; interviews are done to make points.
4. **TAILOR THE MESSAGE TO THE MEDIA AND THE AUDIENCE.** The “must air” points for one interview will not necessarily be the right ones for the next interview.
5. **KEEP IT TIGHT.** Long-winded answers invite misinterpretation of your positions and diminish your effectiveness and credibility. Give a headline response, then elaborate only to the degree that is appropriate.
6. **EYE CONTACT** is critical to credibility. Look the interviewer right in the eye, especially when the questioning is hostile or negative.
7. **USE EXAMPLES, ILLUSTRATIONS AND COMPARISONS** to help your interviewer or audience understand your positions.
8. **DON'T BE DEFENSIVE.** Put your points across firmly and confidently. The interview is a chance for you to tell your story, not a ritual for persecution.
9. **BOTTOM LINE FIRST** is the key to a successful response. If you wind gradually into your conclusion, you invite misunderstanding and suspicion.
10. **ALWAYS BE FRIENDLY AND COURTEOUS** with interviewers even if they don't return the favor. But don't be timid and passive.
11. **CLEAR LANGUAGE AND CONCISE RESPONSES** are essential to success.
12. **DEBRIEF** after every exposure to the media. What did you do right and what could you have done better? This is how great newsmakers get to be great.

© 1993, Virgil Scudder & Associates

VIRGIL  
**Scudder**  
& ASSOCIATES  
MEDIA TRAINING

## GENERAL TERMS TO BE AWARE OF

**On the record:** Anything you say can be quoted and is the default state of any conversation with a reporter. You are on the record the moment you say hello.

**Off the record:** Nothing you say can be quoted or used in the article. Only go off the record if absolutely necessary – reporters don't like it and it may detract from your credibility. Also, **be sure you get the reporter's consent** before saying anything you don't want to see in print!

**On background:** Nothing you say can be quoted, however the information you provide can be used in the article. This is often

used to provide perspective or context when you don't want your name attached to it in print.

**Live:** TV or radio interviews that air in real time.

**Taped:** TV or radio interviews that are pre-recorded and edited to air at a later time. Don't expect to see the full interview in the final airing.

**Live-to-tape:** Pre-recorded TV or radio interviews that air at a later time. These interviews are replayed in full, meaning you can't ask to stop and restate something.



**TD** **AMERITRADE**  
Institutional

Virgil Scudder & Associates is not affiliated with TD AMERITRADE Institutional and, while it is deemed reliable, TD AMERITRADE makes no warranties with respect to services or results obtained from its use. TD AMERITRADE Institutional, Division of TD AMERITRADE, Inc., member NASD/SIPC. TD AMERITRADE is a trademark jointly owned by TD AMERITRADE IP Company, Inc. and The Toronto-Dominion Bank. © 2006 TD AMERITRADE IP Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Used with permission. TDINST #4983 8/06