

## Video 1: Preparing for your Live Journalism Session.mp4

[00:00:12] **Kim Last** Welcome back to going live, building live journalism in your newsroom. This is module four video number one. So now that we talked about all the mechanics of producing live journalism events and covering like journalism events, now it's time to unpack how to best prepare to deliver both a dynamic and entertaining session for your audience. So, I'm going to start with every journalist strength, and that's research. So, you may naturally think that reading everything about your subject or speaking with them is enough. But have you studied how they speak? So, with the rise of podcasts, it's likely the person that you're interviewing has appeared on one or many podcasts. Listen to as many of them as possible. You'll start to hear the same anecdotes, questions that engage them, questions that don't lead to great answers. And you'll start to understand the rhythms of how they answer a question. Whether it's long winded or short podcasts open up the door to get to learn about your subject in an intimate way, especially if you haven't met them before. The same thing can be said about YouTube videos or really any video footage that you can find of them that's not from a cable or television news head. The same thing goes now with past appearances at live events. I actually love to pull old conference footage, if you can. You can study body language and again, listen and look for the rhythms to how they answer a question or how an anecdote is shared. Again, you'll know how they reference things. And again, you'll begin to feel confident in actually how your subject, how the speaker might actually begin to answer your question.

[00:02:01] **Last** So a note on TV appearances. This is where you're going to stumble on a speaker's talking points. So, like I mentioned before, that cable news or TV news hit. This is where you're going to hear them. They're going to be short, concise, maybe a little bit buzzy. Analyze these bytes and think about the best ways to break your speaker out of them. And I'll have more on that in a little bit.

[00:02:27] **Last** Other tips I'd like to offer journalists in their preparation for their sessions. Study social media accounts. What are they posting? What are they engaging with? What are they liking? What are they starring? These can all generate great questions for you. Why are you interested in fly fishing, for example? Or look at that great photo of your family that you just posted great ways to begin to humanize your speaker, humanize that subject that you're interviewing? Another tip that I like to offer, folks, is to go through the alumni magazines of your speaker's alma mater. So, you're likely to find some personal nuggets from the earliest days of an executive's career or other interesting personal details. Research is the best way to be prepared for sessions and your interviews to move beyond talking points. And also, it's the best way to develop the preparation so that you feel confident to rocket through the interview and delivered the most high-octane session possible. One thing that can help you break through the webinar for own feel of virtual events we talked about this quite a bit. Visuals throw up an image and get your subject to respond. Make it a lightning round of rapid-fire questions. A lot of yes or no answers and quick rapid form is actually a little bit fun or beginning to give them a little bit of time a time limit to how to answer. You get 15 seconds on this or 20 seconds on this and actually getting those tiny things. That's another way to begin to mix up the tempo here.

[00:04:13] **Last** Let's also now talk about how to get your questions ready. So, I think about question preparation as almost being like a good pitcher in baseball who is constantly changing their speeds and changing the curve of the ball and where it's going to land. So, a good interviewer should mix up the length of their questions. So, it's fine to ask a longer, thoughtful question with a little bit more of a lead up to it. But make sure they're not all that style and all super loquacious. You should also be able to blend in short, punch

your questions to create a more stimulating pace, and you should especially be listening for places where you can follow up. The worst thing that you want to do is have a script, stick to that script and be so focused on that script that you might have missed something when a speaker was giving you a really sharp answer that you should have actually followed up on, that could have been that newsmaking moment. You also want to consider where you want to play your toughest questions. It's not always my advice to start with the hardest question right at the top of a session, it's like you want to warm up a little bit, you want to get comfortable here. You want to begin to have an establish a bit of rapport with your speaker, even if it might turn out to be a tense interview at the end, you don't want to start that one at the back. It's going to feel uncomfortable for the audience to watch, and you may end up losing out on that engagement. I like to think about like journalism here as it's almost like a workout. You know, there's the warm up at the beginning, and then there's the hard intensity right in the middle, and then there's the time for the cool down. So, another tip on getting your questions ready is to source the experts around you. So, newsrooms are filled with subject matter experts. So, if you're second guessing that interview with a retail CEO because you just haven't covered retail, tap the colleague who's reporting on the beat and ask them to review the questions with you and make sure you're not missing something from an industry perspective. And then here's a note on follow ups. Some of the best interviews are when you throw your plan completely out the window. Don't feel like you need to stick to the script if your subject says something so interesting, so groundbreaking that you want and you have to follow up like journalism at the end of the day is about actively listening. You know, you're listening closely and pressing into the openings where you can make some news reveals something new. Heck, maybe even have a moment that gets clipped and goes viral on social media. Those are all go all the goals that you should be thinking about as you craft what this session is going to be like. You also want to make sure your guest doesn't have a slate of canned answers. So, one idea to keep panelists kind of slightly off balance in order to capture the most spontaneous and least rehearsed questions. The more time they have to prepare for an answer, the more you're going to get like a sort of canned response. So, this is why typically I don't always divulge every single question I would be offering up to a subject that I'm interviewing. I'd give them a real good sense of the outline, but I would never share the full set of questions ahead of time. Even though you probably will be asked ethically where I work at the Wall Street Journal, we simply don't do that, but we do map out, you know, the areas that we're going to touch upon. And if there is a, you know, newsworthy component news of the day, as I like to say that we like to talk about, I give a heads up that that might be something that comes up in our discussion.

[00:08:18] **Last** I also want to take a minute to address stage fright and how you can move past it. It happens to everyone and it's overwhelming. You're either stepping on a stage in front of an audience, in front of an audience that is live and, in the hundreds, or you're sitting in your home office on Zoom. And it's just you. And that could also be a bit scary as well because you have no idea what the audience that's tuning in is actually thinking while you're presenting. So how can you move past all of that? I have three tips that you should think about. Number one, practice seriously. Say your questions out loud. Phrase your questions in a clear and concise way. Oftentimes, I find, especially if you're a journalist, you're going to write a question really differently from how you're actually going to say it and speak it. When you're in live journalism and you're in that moment of the session, you want to lean into the world of how you'd say it and how you speak it. Number two, remind yourself despite the fear this is actually going to be fun, you should try to have fun. It's not a visit to the dentist, for example. And number three, reframe Stage fright into excitement. There's a study from 2013 from Harvard Business School that found that instead of staying calm, if you channeled excitement for something that could make you anxious. It actually

led to better performance and outcomes. So instead, again, it's a sort of a mental sort of tweak here. It's going to be exciting. It's going to be fun. It's not going to be an anxious, provoking type of experience. I've actually linked in the optional reading the full study from this academic and Harvard Business School. I recommend everybody giving that a read through. If you have the time, so we just spent this video diving into all of the ways to begin to craft your questions, stack and build out your session, and all the ways to really move your speaker away from the world of canned answers into entertaining, thoughtful, dynamic, buzzworthy and hopefully news making statements. Our next video, I'm going to sit down with my colleague from the Wall Street Journal, Joanna Stern. And we're going to dove into a bit of her creative process around how she crafts her sessions for life journalism at the journal. I hope to see you there and thanks again.