

THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

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Four's team of media trainers give their views on some of *'the good, the bad and the ugly'* media moments from recent months.



In this issue of our **media training newsletter**, we analyse how the interviewees in our chosen *good, bad and ugly* examples performed. Did they get their intended messages across? What type of interviewer did they come up against? And how well did they do overall?

We also share **what you can learn from these interviews** and how you can use the lessons learned to enhance your own media messaging.

The good – [“It’s not a victimless crime”, Dame Sharon White, chair of John Lewis Partnership, Good Morning Britain, 29 August 2023](#)

Dame Sharon White delivered a masterclass on the power of preparation when she joined Good Morning Britain to discuss shoplifting and the cost-of-living crisis.

At the very start, White reinforced John Lewis’s status as one of the biggest employers in the world. She also emphasised how the business’ unique partnership meant even shoppers can ‘feel like they own the business’. This made White appear authoritative while promoting John Lewis’s USP.

White kept this control for the whole interview, even for tricky questions that followed about the business’s loss of £234 million – and she was very honest about why this was the case. She also emphasised the company’s mission to increase efficiency, all whilst not compromising on quality. She then took a firm stance on shoplifting, clearly stating the need for legislative change to protect shop owners. Outlining the many stakeholders struggling with this issue, White demonstrated that shoplifting is ‘not a victimless crime’.

This interview proved the power of preparation. White went into the interview with several key points to make – and she made them. This made her appear knowledgeable and calm throughout. By preparing a robust and well thought-out messaging framework, you can do the same no matter what question comes your way.

Watch the full interview [here](#).

The bad - [“Does anyone ever say when you’ve done a good job?”, Gillian Keegan, education secretary, ITV News, 4 September](#)

Gillian Keegan reminded us of one of the golden rules of broadcast interviews in September; the cameras are never off! In an interview about the school Raac crisis, Keegan handled the interview fairly well – until she thought it was over. Keegan launched into a foul-mouthed outburst, complaining that no one ever congratulated the government for doing a good job. To make matters even worse, she topped off the remarks by sarcastically asking whether there was “any sign of that, no?”

This is far from the first time a spokesperson has made a blunder when the cameras were still running, but it serves as a powerful lesson. When on camera, it is imperative to remain as if you are in the middle of a live interview. Do not change from this mindset until your microphone is taken off and you have stopped talking to the journalist. You are never off the record and anything you say could, in theory, be used against you. Always be careful!

The other key takeaway here is that it is unwise to be too self-congratulatory. While this is a particularly bad example, being too proud about your achievements risks coming across as arrogant and insensitive. On the other hand, a little bit of humility can make you appear empathetic and more trustworthy to your audience.

Watch the full clip [here](#).

The ugly – [“Are you going to shut up and listen?” Lee Anderson interview with Owen Jones, YouTube, 5 October 2023](#)

Lee Anderson’s encounter at the Conservative Party conference with Owen Jones, a political commentator and columnist at the Guardian, left much to be desired. Jones started the short interview in an interrogative manner, which can’t have been a surprise given his political leanings.

Anderson could have taken the high road and answered his questions in a calm and level-headed way. Instead, he interrupted Jones by telling him ‘to shut his mouth and listen’, leading Jones to bring up previous controversial statement Anderson had made about food banks. During the heated clash Anderson challenged Jones to ‘show [him] these kids that are in poverty’, rather than making a reasoned counter-argument.

Going to battle with a hostile interviewer is rarely a winning formula. Insulting and raising the tension can make one look rude and unlikeable. It can also open oneself up to looking embarrassed and defensive. In almost every case, it is best to keep an interviewer on side, while sticking to your key messages at every opportunity.

That all said, in politics, the rules don’t always apply in the same way. Was Lee Anderson playing to his own audience?

Watch the interview [here](#) (starts at 4:55)

GET IN TOUCH

Landing an effective interview, getting your key messages across and not feeling railroaded by an inquisitive journalist isn’t a dark art. At Four, we assiduously prepare our clients and spokespeople with **our proprietary 1-3-6-2 messaging framework** to enable them to feel ready to go into any interview with the confidence to be more than good – and definitely not bad or ugly.

If you want to find out more, please get in touch: info@four.agency

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