

Julie: Good morning, everyone. I'm Julie Livingston and I'm from Want Leverage Communications here for another episode of PR Patter where I chat with the amazing people from across my marketing and public relations network today. I am so thrilled to have [Paula Rizzo](#) with me. Paula is an Emmy award winning television producer, formerly with Fox, bestselling author of [Listful Thinking](#) and [Listful Living](#) which she'll talk about a little bit. Media training coach, a speaker, a LinkedIn Learning instructor and host of the live stream show Inside Scoop - which I love watching - and creator of the popular online media training program. Paula, Tell me a little bit more about your backstory.

Paula: I've worked in TV for close to two decades, which was wonderful - to be able to tell stories about people and companies. I covered health news for a long time, in New York. doing both local and national news. So I got to cover a lot of stuff throughout those years, which was very fun, both in the control room. And then sometimes I'd go out in the field and I was a field producer and get those stories that way, which was great.

Paula: Then I left TV news six years ago and decided to go out on my own. But I had been doing a lot before that because my first book, Listful Thinking, came out while I was still working in TV. And so when that book came out, becoming an author is, you know, you have a whole business. You become the one who's then the face of that brand, like it or not. I started to do a lot of public speaking around the book, and I started to learn a lot about the things that people do to bring in guests and realized how hard it is.

Paula: I've sort of seen it from both sides - as a TV producer and then as a potential guest. You know, I do a lot of media myself now, both about productivity and list making, which my books are about. And then, when I media coach authors or experts or anybody, I do a lot on how to not make mistakes on camera, how to make sure that you're very prepared and all of the above from my days as a TV producer, but also from using myself as a guinea pig, too.

Julie:.. And don't you find that you learn something every time you're on camera?

Paula: I do find that every time I'm on camera, I sort of learn something else or get to fine tune it because every time is like the first time I'm doing it. But it's also like improv, because you never know what will happen.

Paula: The last time I was on TV, I did something and the anchor didn't love the answer that I gave and kept pushing back. And I was like, this is a friendly story. I don't get it. The host was kind of cranky. So you sort of have to be prepared and do this a lot so that you don't fall. You don't get rusty. I've had a number of clients for whom I was preparing for a television interview, radio or a digital media interview.

Paula: And they would kind of write off the preparation, saying "Oh, I've done this before. I kind of know, I know the drill." And I would always say, you know, It's not the same; this is a new experience. Every interview is different. The angle will be different. The time in the world is

different. Different things have happened that they may want you to respond to. And you really do need to practice how you come across.

Julie: So what have you found in your experience of the past two decades? What do great spokespersons do on camera that really connects them to the story?

Paula: They are prepared, but not overprepared. It doesn't seem like they are memorizing and saying things. It's like they've said it for the first time. Because for your audience and for you, it's the first time you're hearing it. And so you want it to feel fresh. And that's one of the things that I do teach my clients too. It's like you're a Broadway actor. Just because you did the matinee does not mean you can mail it in for the evening performance.

Julie: That's a great comparison. And those actors are constantly rehearsing, even though they've done the show. Like if you've been in the Lion King for 25 years, you still have to practice.

Paula: You know, you know it backwards and forwards. There's no one else who knows it better. Right. And same thing, you know, you're, you know, your expertise, you know, your stories. But the thing is, each experience is different. Anytime I do TV, I practice again and again and again, before I get on. I talk about this stuff all the time.

Paula: It's just, sometimes you need to hear yourself say it, say it out loud. Be able to hear the words come out of your mouth, tell the story. You might keep stumbling over *that* word. Don't say *that* word when you're doing it on camera. Say a different word. You know, "lists" is a really hard word to say unfortunately, and it's in my book a million times.

Paula: So, I have to think of other ways to talk about things at times. And you could trip up.

Julie: I mean, you could get a little tongue tied at certain points when you are trying to make your points, you know, make your key messages really fly on a media interview.

Paula: Exactly. And if you know, it is about preparing, don't be over prepared but also conversational. The best guests are also the ones who can do a little improv, right? You know, the question comes at them that maybe they weren't completely prepared for. The truth is there are no bad questions. You should be prepared for anything that they say, because you have your talking points in hand. So even if they ask you something you don't know the answer to, you can sort of roll with the punches and bring it back to what you do want to talk about. So there, I'm never afraid that I won't know the answer or that type of thing, but the truth is that you have to listen.

Paula: And, and that's what some of the best interviewers and interviewees do too, is to follow up questions, the questions that maybe you didn't expect they would ask after that.

Julie: Well, you have to be fully present where you're doing any kind of an interview, right? No distractions around you, quiet space.

Paula: Some people like to meditate before. So if you want to do five or 10 minute meditation before you go on, but be fully present and, you know, Be able to listen, right? Be able to listen effectively.

Julie: Yeah, exactly.

Paula: And, and I think also welcome new types of questions. You know, the most fun interviews are the ones where someone will ask you something that you've never been asked before, that you really do have to think on your toes. This is after you've done media for a while and you're not terrified and petrified of what they'll ask. It is actually nice. The podcast or the interviews that I've done. Where, you know, people dig into things that it's like, Oh, wow, I hadn't thought about that for years.

Paula: I'm an Instagram scroller and I was watching a video. It was the Today Show, the fourth hour, sorry. And it was, the actress Jamie Lee Curtis. She was a guest speaking to Hoda and, uh, Jenna Bush Hager. And she said to them, and this was not even an interview question, but she just said off the cuff, about the way people love the show. And I think one of the reasons they love it, and they relate to you both as co hosts is the way you look at them, your eye contact.

Julie: This is actually something that I myself have flubbed over the years when I've done television interviews. Where you're supposed to look could be a little different than looking straight ahead.. And it is awkward even if you're in person with someone, where do I look?

Paula: Do I look in their eyes? Do I look at their forehead, their mouth, where should I look? So this tip was given to me years ago by a senior producer when I would go out in the field and I would interview people and say, I don't know where to look when I'm asking these questions. And he said, just pick one eye and stare in that one eye the whole time you're doing the interview. And then that way you never have to think about it again. You don't have to worry about it. So I tell all of my clients to do it. I do it as well. Anybody watching can go do it today. Any person you talk to. Carry on that conversation and look in that one eye. It makes life so much easier. And then if you're doing a virtual digital video like this, looking directly into the camera. This will give you some great eye contact with the audience so that they'll see you looking right at them. So that you have that connection with them, even though you're not in the room. And it's really important because so often, you know, everybody has their phone now and they're doing their videos on their phone and everyone's looking at themselves, they're looking down. So like right now I'm looking down, so I can see you, Julie, to be able to see your reaction. But the truth is when I'm presenting, I'm looking directly into that camera so that I make sure that the audience knows that I'm talking directly to them.

Paula: And you know, when you're on Zoom, so we're, you, we're not using Zoom today, but today, but, when you have Zoom, what I do is I, I make the little window really small and then I stick it all the way up to the top as you can to the camera. So you just have to cheat just a little bit to look down and see the person.

Julie: I like that. I'm going to do that next time. Have seasoned spokespersons ever surprised you by flubbing an interview?

Paula: I mean, there's one, there was one time I had an interview where the guy was fantastic in the green room. During the pre interviews, like just everything was rolling along. And as soon as we put him on set and those cameras went on, he lost it. I remember being in the control room thinking, what is happening? What is going on?

Julie: So what do you think? Did he get nervous? Yeah, it was nerves. It was nervous because he had done some videos. I mean, I saw, obviously, like as a TV producer, you have to watch, you know, you have to make sure this person, but when he got out there, I guess it was like, it wasn't live, but it was live to tape. So, in the moment, there was no starting over. I think it was the only interview I never used because I was like, I can't. Last year he flubbed it pretty badly. Oh, it was, it was, it was so uncomfortable that even the anchor, I remember afterwards, came up to me.

He's like, what was that? What happened? I say, I know. I can't even talk about it. It happens, I guess, but you know, we try to avoid that.

Julie: So how do people, how do you recommend that people kind of get over the nervousness of actually going, you know, it's one thing when you prepared in advance, you've been in the green room, you're hanging out. And then when you actually go on set and you see all the equipment and you're kind of the star, it can throw you off.

Paula: And I think that's what, you know, of course there's preparation and you have to do all of that. But you know, at the same time, you do need to know what you're walking into. What does that studio look like? Have you been in this environment before?

Paula: There was another woman once who I had interviewed. She was a veterinarian and I'll never forget it. As soon as she started talking, she got red. Her whole body started to get red. And so we had to stop the tape just for a second and gave her a little time to calm down. Then she was fine. First initial take you know, nerves, but how would she have known? She hadn't done that much on camera before. So it's like, you have to know that of yourself. Is that going to happen to you? You need to project so you're minimizing the number of on camera surprises.

Paula: We talked a lot about improv and being ready for anything and whatever, but at the same time, you know, I like to be as prepared as possible to know - what does that studio look like? Who's the anchor? Who's going to interview you so you can take notice of their style? Yes. Watch what they've done before. You know, what do they, what do they do?

Paula: You know, Gayle King, when she has authors on. Most of the time she'll read from the first page of the book. She does it all the time.. And so I always tell my authors, if you're going to do that show, you need to be prepared to talk about the first page of your book and why you chose that word as your first word, because she might ask you. She's done it before. First of all, I think it's a great technique to draw people into the book. She appears as though she's actually read the whole book. I mean, that's impossible, but the way she delivers it is so convincing.

Paula: So you have to watch and see, you know, you have to know a little bit about the show format. I had a client once who knew that the host loved Dallas, the show Dallas, because he would talk about it all the time. It was like his favorite show and he would go on and on. So she made a couple of jokes about Dallas and then they became friends. Sometimes you've got to do a little bit of homework.

Julie: I agree. I've had a few situations where. Things didn't go as expected. One time I walked into a CBS studio here in New York. It was a local news and I was going to go on. It was when I was at the Toy Association and I was going to go on and talk about either product or product safety. And, one of the camera people came out before the broadcast. I went to high school with him. It was so unexpected, so bizarre, you know, it was like one of those small world, New York stories, but it did throw me off a little bit. I became so self conscious. Like, what are you doing here in my office? Actually, wait, I'm in your office. This is weird. And we had dated, so it was so crazy. And then there was another time where I'd do some consumer product promotion on television. Some of those products were electronic and they didn't work, they were all prototypes and I'd have to get recentered and just explain how they should work. That made me sweat although I don't think I showed it. But I was, you know, you have to be prepared for those things.

Paula: I mean in cooking segments, you have to think, is the blender going to work? What happens then? There's part of it that you can flub through and, you know, be funny about, you know, or ignore, uh, depending if it's so obvious you have to address it, right?

Paula: You can, you know, if there's a fly in your face and it won't leave you alone and then you have to address it. I've had flies, not in my face, but in, in, in guest space flies camera. Yeah. I've had camera lights blow out, on the set, fire alarms going off. We've had everything happen in a live show.

Julie: Oh, my God, that's hilarious. So tell us about the do's and don'ts of setting up your own remote studio and being camera ready because I love your background. It's so neat looking. It actually looks like you are on kind of a morning show, sort of a set. The lighting is so good. So explain the ins and outs of that. Because I think now that we have video capability from anywhere it's something that people can have a hard time with. I keep a little ring light in my suitcase.

Paula: That's smart because you never know and you want to say yes, because if you say no to a media opportunity, you may not get one again, especially from that person, they'll move on.

Paula: It's obviously very deliberate the way that I've set up my background, because this is part of your brand. This is now part of your studio. Thankfully we're all able to do this now from anywhere, which is unbelievable. If I told you 10 years ago that we'd be doing a live show right now on our own. Could you imagine that? It's really crazy. This is the future.

Paula: The first thing is to always think through lighting. That is one of the biggest mistakes that people make is that they think that they have to either, you know, get really fancy lighting or they don't pay enough attention to it. So you just need light in front of you. Not behind you because if the light is behind you, you'll be very dark. So you want to put light in front of you as much as possible.

Paula: I love natural light. So if you could do a window even better. If you're traveling, you know, you want to set yourself up right by a window so that you have some good light. I also have a light here that I bring in the light source because I don't have a window.

Julie: I have a ring light in front of me looking down. So it's kind of looking down and I think that works well.

Paula: It does exactly. You just need to play around with it. Sometimes you'll need to bring in a little extra light here or there. You know, as you can see, I have some light coming in from this side of the room. That's where my window is. I have the window shades closed. There's so much you can do at certain times of the day. But to be able to at least have, you know, the, the light in front of you is number one. Number two is to also look at what's behind you. Is there some depth between you and the back of the room? Because so often we have people up against the wall and nothing behind them or nothing there. And I get it. It's hard. Like, you know, if you're in New York city, these spaces are small, so you can't always have the luxury of space. But to think through that a little bit, what's behind you? Are there live elements? Is your book there? Do you have a plant? What colors are behind you? Is your dog going in and out of the background? You may not want that. I think during the pandemic, people were very forgiving although I was never forgiving of this because as a TV producer, I was like, close the door. Don't let anyone in there.

Paula: But, you know, now people are more serious about keeping their set safe. So you definitely want to do that. You want to have your camera eye level as much as possible with you. So you're looking directly at the camera. It's not looking up at you. It's not looking down. So you may have to put your computer on some books or on a stand or something like that. I love good audio. So I always have an external microphone. Test it before you go live. Yes. Exactly. I make sure that it's, it's chosen. It's the chosen one on, on the settings.

Paula: So all you hear is the room, you know, you hear the room noise. These little things can really elevate how you look and, and also make it so that you'll get booked again and that actually they'll like to have you show up as professional as possible.

Julie: So you've written a few books about list making and productivity, which I love. And, you've shared so many great productivity tips in the media yourself and in webinars you do. But how, how might listmaking help to prepare one for a media interview, Paula?

Paula: Yes. Well, talking points. So coming up with the ideas and the thoughts - the bullet points that you want to get across. We never want to come across as someone who has memorized something or having it roll off the top of their head. You want it to seem like you've just thought of this, you know, and that it's very natural. So the way that you do this is by making lists. I mean, I love to come up with lists of, okay, here's the bullet points I really want to come across. And then even having a checklist before you go live. I mean in TV news, we had a checklist before we would go live. Did you do this? Did you do that? Is your computer hardwired? Did you restart your modem? Like, you know, all of those things to make sure that your tech works really well. You think, Oh, I'll remember. And you never do. So to be able to have that checklist with you to go through before the live interview or whatever it is. Check your lighting, all of that. It's really helpful, and then as you're coming with content ideas too, you know, being able to any, any ideas and thoughts that you have that then maybe could become a pitch or could become, you know, content that you want to do a blog post on or your own video, you know, so often people think, Oh, I'll save it for when I get a good media interview. I'll save that good idea. And I say, don't save anything, put it out there as soon as possible, put it out in the world, say it. I've so often gotten media hits from things that I've already written and things I've already done that they say, Oh, that's interesting. Let's do something about that. And you can always kind of reframe it later in some way.

Julie: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah, no, I love that. Okay. Well, we waited till the end to talk about something. And that is, I love Paula. I've looked through all of your archives, your videos, and have, you know, watched your videos when they're live. Of course, you always wear color as do I. And today we wore the same color. We didn't even try. So talk about that. I think with men, especially, this can be an issue. I have often said to my male clients who are doing a media interview where they're going to either be photographed or they're going to be on camera. And I just love them in color.

Paula: It's just, you know, black and white is boring on camera. It's just forgettable.

Julie: I think so.

Paula: And, you know, the lighting is not great for black or white, unless you're in a professional studio and there is a lighting tech there who will light you perfectly, which does not always happen. And especially if you're the guest, you come in and you get the guest lighting, which is what everybody gets, you know, so they're not doing anything special for you.

So you should definitely have some bright pops of color. I love jewel tones. It just makes you stand out. It just does something for your complexion. Right. It looks really rich on camera; it

makes you memorable. You know, it really does, think about it. The Queen of England would always be wearing one of those little outfits with the color, all the color was monochromatic.

Paula: Absolutely. So dramatic. I mean, it was a little quirky, but it became her signature and it was very memorable. Exactly. And you know, at the same time, I've had clients who really do like a specific color. Or a specific type of dress or outfit or whatever, and that becomes their signature.

Paula: And they say, well, I want to wear it all the time. I said, okay, fine. Then go with it. You know? And they said, but people are going to think I only have one outfit. I'm like, who cares? If that's what you feel comfortable in, that's what you like to do. Go for it. I mean, think about it. Even Ina Garten. I'm thinking, you know, Barefoot Contessa, she wears a lot of the similar, you know, she has like denim shirt, denim shirt.

Paula: Yeah. It's her shirt. It's her. It's her look. I do a lot of these shows. What if I repeat an outfit? Does it even matter? Do people even care? No, no. I mean, I do. I do tons of these too. I'm like, how many of these outfits or I'm like, I think people are going to think I always wear red.

Julie: Cause I have a lot. I'm not telling my husband that you said this. I like to have some retail therapy here and there.

Paula: Exactly.

Julie: Paula, how can people get in touch with you? Well, you could go to my website, paularizzo.com of course on LinkedIn, I'm very active over on LinkedIn. Okay. That's awesome.

Thanks so much for being with me today. And I will see you all next time on another installment of PR Patter.