Experience in field, straightforward nature have national media outlets calling on Kenneth Trump

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When there’s a student shooting or random act of school violence anywhere in the country, Kenneth S. Trump doesn’t stray too far from his phone. That’s because despite having a small, Cleveland-based consulting firm with just two employees — Mr. Trump and his wife of 10 years — he’s become known in some circles as a school safety expert.

Mr. Trump’s company, National School Safety and Security Services, doesn’t rent officers or guard dogs, and he doesn’t sell security cameras or metal detectors. Instead, Mr. Trump’s product is his knowledge and experience in school safety issues.

And it’s been this knowledge and experience that has led to Mr. Trump becoming known as somewhat of a go-to man for the national media.

Information source

Over the past 20 years, Mr. Trump, who founded his company in 1997, has worked in 45 states with school and public safety officials, utilizing his experience in school security and assessments, emergency preparedness, crisis training and school safety and crisis consulting services.

“Emergency training has become very popular in recent years, with Columbine and other school shootings and 9/11,” according to Mr. Trump, who has trained teachers, school administrators, police and fire department personnel and emergency management agency officials.

But in addition to his hands-on work in training, another dimension of Mr. Trump’s business is the time he spends being an “expert” — whether it’s on the phone with reporters, doing live interviews, fielding offers to endorse some safety product (which he always refuses) or answering questions.

“It’s neat to be on the air being asked your opinion on Fox or CNN, but it’s time-consuming,” said Mr. Trump, who has a bachelor’s degree in social service with a criminal justice concentration and a master’s degree in public administration from Cleveland State University.

In the wake of a school-safety crisis such as the early October Amish school shootings in Pennsylvania, Mr. Trump said he may get as little as two hours of sleep in a night and field as many as 70 calls in a day from national media asking him to go live with his analysis or opinion.

In October, Mr. Trump’s opinion on school safety was included in publications ranging from the Orlando Sentinel to The Washington Post, Philadelphia Inquirer, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and Baltimore Sun.

Making a name for himself

How did a small Cleveland business owner’s name end up in the Rolodex of the national media?

The best way to get on the media’s go-to lists is to contact them and let them know about you or pay someone to do the legwork for you, according to Cynthia Bell of Bell Public Relations in Cleveland. National speakers bureaus also can be helpful.

“Let them know your expertise, and that you are available for consultation. Give credentials,” she said. Other advice from Ms. Bell includes sending out press releases and having a web site, which could help when members of the media search on the Internet for sources.

Although Mr. Trump sent out a few news releases when he started his company, today he doesn’t use advisors or PR firms to tout his name to the media during a crisis. However, he has kept his name visible to the media and public in other ways.

Mr. Trump, who in 1990 founded Trump through the Poynter Institute, a school for journalists in St. Petersburg, Fla. A daily e-mail on industry news and tips included a link to a site that listed Mr. Trump as a source for covering school shootings.

“I then went to Mr. Trump’s web site to find out more about him. I also did a web search and plugged in school safety, and his name came up a lot. I called him, and he was really approachable, and knowledgeable. He doesn’t mess around, and he’s not afraid to say what he thinks,” said Ms. Orr, who spoke with Mr. Trump about school security after newspaper employees walked unannounced into several schools in that state.

As far as Mr. Trump is concerned, hard work and honesty are part of the reason people turn to him. “A lot of times consultants trip, or they are afraid to tell their clients what they don’t want to hear,” Mr. Trump said. “You can’t change the climate if you don’t change the conversation. You have to be outspoken and politically incorrect and you have to step outside the box to become an expert in your field.”