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Management Consultants
In Communications

TRANSFORMING MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS INTO BETTER COMMUNICATORS, EVEN LEADERS

Participant Guide

*A Web Seminar Sponsored by the
**International Association of
Business Communicators (IABC)***

Presented by


**James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA**

**Wednesday, February 25, 2009
12:00 – 1:30 p.m. EST**



Contents

- Participant Letter
- PowerPoint Presentation
- Handout
- James E. Lukaszewski Biography



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In Communications

February 2009

Dear Web Seminar Participant:

Thank you for registering for the IABC virtual seminar, *Transforming Managers and Supervisors Into Better Communicators, Even Leaders*. During the brief time we'll be together by telephone on February 25th, I'll discuss specific tools and techniques that you can teach and coach managers and supervisors to help them become leaders and communicators.

Please review the enclosed materials. I'll use these thought blocks during my presentation. Also included with the *Participant Guide* are related handout materials and an extensive bibliography. During the last 20 minutes of the program, time will be devoted to the specific questions and concerns of those participating.

Should you wish to contact me ahead of time with the issues or questions you'd like me to address during the seminar, you may do so by phone, or E-mail:

914.681.0000 – Office
tlg@e911.com – E-mail

If you would like to visit my Web site or blog to get a flavor for the extensive knowledge and background brought to bear on today's topic, please go to:

www.e911.com – Web site
www.e911.com/crisisgurublog.html – Blog

Included in the *Participant Guide* is a discussion outline. Should you or those attending with you care to talk about the program, assess what you learned, and identify some additional questions you might like to explore following the presentation, this outline can get a good discussion started.

Thank you for participating in this Web seminar. I know you'll find the program very important, helpful, and useful.

Sincerely,

James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA*
Chairman and President
The Lukaszewski Group Inc.

P.S. My books, monographs, and strategy newsletters are available through my Web site, www.e911.com.

Welcome to the IABC Web Seminar
Wednesday, February 25, 2009

Transforming Managers and Supervisors Into Better Communicators, Even Leaders

By James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

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Questions for Jim

To ask a question . . . click "Q&A" on the menu bar at the top of your screen.



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2. Click "Ask" to submit your question.

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Insert this and then when facing

International Association of Business Communicators

Overcoming Opposition: Dealing Effectively With Emotionalized Issues, Organized and Disorganized Opposition, Media Attacks, and Persistent Bad News
August 22, 2007

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NO YES

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What was the most important thing you learned?

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Attending Today

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www.e911.com

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In This Issue

- Want the Boss to Participate? To Influence During Crisis? Here's a Plan
- The Dark Art of Laying People Off: A Crisis Management Case Study
- Watch Your Language
- Makeup the News

Quick Links

- About Us
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- Schedule Jim as a Speaker
- The Crisis Store
- TLG Web Site

Executive Action
Strategic Management Insights for Leaders, Decision Makers, and Their Trusted Advisors

January 14, 2009
Number 3

Note to Readers

Hope you are finding *Executive Action* helpful. In this edition we add two more features that you will see from time to time.

New feature in this issue: Watch Your Language

We'll take a quote from a newspaper, publication, or speech and translate it into what should have been said. The very interesting first feature deals with a spokesperson talking about the Rhino, a utility terrain vehicle (UTV) manufactured by Yamaha, which is coming under fire for the accidents and injuries associated with their use.

James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

Photo Credit: Harry Turner.

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Today's Program

- Employee basic needs
- Supervisors' basic challenges
- How employees value information
- 10 transformational communications strategies

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Managers Work Inside the Box

Leaders Work
Outside the Box

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Supervisor Communication Tasks

- Answer person
- Center of trust
- Coach
- Contention reducer
- Information source
- Inspirer
- Leader
- Listener/evaluator
- Problem solver
- Storyteller

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Supervisory Communication Challenges

- Angry employees
- Answering questions of any kind
- Communicating change
- Delivering tough news
- Emotional people and questions
- Firing people/layoffs
- Filling information vacuum
- Moving people around
- Unethical conduct

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The Manager's Environment

What do they want?

- Acknowledgement
 - Does anyone know I'm here?
- Recognition of effort
 - Is what I do important?
- Constructive direction
 - Can anybody help me?
- Peace of mind
- Trust

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How Employees Value Information

CEO	5%
Upper management	6%
Middle management	7%
District management	8%
First-line supervisory management	30%
TGNTM	24%
IMIUI	20%
	<hr/>
	100%

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Employee Core Values

- Personal job security
- Company survivability
- Safe and healthy tasks
- Recognition (from supervisor)
- Candor (from supervisor)
- Truth (from his or her management)
- Trust (both ways)

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What Creates Emotional Responses?

1. Anger
 - FEAR and betrayal
2. Frustration
 - FEAR, powerlessness, helplessness, loneliness
3. Victimization
 - Walking but wounded
 - Questions go unanswered
 - FEAR of more harm

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Trust = Absence of Fear

Fear = Absence of Trust

Trust Loss = Emotional Response/Contention

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10 Transformational Communications Strategies

1. Communicate on purpose.
What are your intentions?

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Communication Intentions

- Candor
- Openness, accessibility
- Truthfulness
- Apology
- Responsiveness
- Empathy
- Transparency
- Engagement
- Correction and clarification

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2. Listen.

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The SSOLERR Listening System*

- **S** Stop what you're doing and focus
- **S** Face the person or group *Squarely*
- **O** Adopt an *Open*, constructive posture
- **L** *Lean* forward toward the individual or group to show interest
- **E** Make good *Eye* contact
- **R** *Relax*
- **R** Question *Reflectively*, using *who, what, why, where, when, how* to achieve open-ended questions

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* Lukaszewski 2009 modification of Egan, G. (1990). *The Skilled Helper*, 4th Ed. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

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3. Be heard.

- Develop a style that gains attention comfortably.

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THE POWER OF TALK: WHO GETS HEARD AND WHY*

	Style of Talking
Sharing Credit	Uses "we" rather than "I" to describe accomplishments.
	Why? Using "I" seems too self-promoting.
Acting Modest	Downplays their certainty, rather than minimizing doubts, about future performance.
	Why? Confident behavior seems too boastful.
Asking Questions	Asks questions freely.
	Why? Questions generate needed knowledge.
Apologizing	Apologizes freely.
	Why? Apologies express concern for others.
Giving Feedback	Notes weaknesses only after first citing strengths.
	Why? Buffering criticism saves face for the individual receiving feedback.
Avoiding Verbal Opposition	Avoids challenging others' ideas, and hedges when stating own ideas.
	Why? Verbal opposition signals destructive fighting.
Managing Up	Avoids talking up achievements with higher-ups.
	Why? Emphasizing achievements to higher-ups constitutes boasting.
Being Indirect	Speaks indirectly rather than bluntly when telling subordinates what to do.
	Why? Blatantly directing others is too bossy.

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* The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why, from *HBR in Brief* (a Communication E-mail Newsletter publication), Harvard Business Review School Publishing by Deborah Tannen, published October 30, 2008. Reprinted with permission.

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4. Be a storyteller.

- Remember how you learned the most important lessons of your life.

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Story-Like Construction

Story-like construction:

- Beginning, middle, end
- Brief
- People oriented
- Plain language
- Positive
- Self-evident truth, lesson, moral, message, or purpose

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Build Your Own Stories

SUCCESS TIPS FOR STORYTELLERS

- Analyze and understand why your favorite stories work. Use the same process to perfect new stories.
- Find excellent sources for story models, which help you create better stories, see:
 - American Speaker
 - Bits and Pieces
 - Reader's Digest
 - Storytelling Magazine
 - Final Speeches of the Day
- Join the National Storytelling Association, National Speakers Association, or the Canadian Authors Association.
- Be alert to good stories you hear. Jot them down, analyze why they work.
- Create a story idea folder and keep it in your desk. When you get an idea or a thought of a message you'd like to get across, jot it down on a flash like the sample on the right.
- Create a lesson, quote, or self-evident truth folder and look for stories that can serve as evidence for your messages.

STORY DEVELOPMENT FORMAT

- Message, communication objective, moral, lesson, punch line, purpose

- Plain language synopsis

- People focus, main characters

- Structure, sequence of events (Beginning, Middle, End)

- Key Facts

- Human factors

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Story Sources

- Reader's Digest: www.rd.com
- Vital Speeches: www04.mcmurry.com/product/VITAL/
- Build your own collection

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National Storytelling Association

www.storynet.org
1-800-525-4514

Canadian Authors Association

www.canauthors.org
1-866-216-6222 – North American Toll Free

Canadian Association of Professional Speakers

www.canadianspeakers.org
1-416-646-1600

National Speakers Association

www.nsaspeakers.org
1-480-968-2552

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5. Use positive, declarative language.

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Use Positive Language

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. I don't believe it . . . or you. | 1. Here's what I believe. Here's what we believe . . . |
| 2. It won't work; it never worked. | 2. Here's how it might work. Here are some suggestions to make it work . . . |
| 3. That's a lie. | 3. Check the facts more carefully and you'll find . . . |
| 4. That's not our style. | 4. We're known, even respected for . . . |
| 5. We don't do that. | 5. Here's what we actually do. |
| 6. We don't invest in benefits our employees won't use. | 6. We have three categories of employees, each with distinctly different needs . . . |
| 7. We've never done that. | 7. Here, specifically, is what we do . . . |
| 8. You're wrong. | 8. Let's look at the facts . . . |

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6. Reduce contention.

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Avoid Color Words

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Distraught **Fight**
Ashamed **SCARED**
Humiliated **Questionable**
DESTRUCTIVE

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Contention Reduction

1. Focus forward.
2. Stay positive.
3. Find the constructive alternative.
4. Put yourself in their shoes every time.
5. Control your own emotions.
6. Avoid annoying behaviors.
7. Defuse, de-escalate.

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Self-Analysis Required

Avoid annoying behaviors

- Abusive language
- Arrogance
- Bullying
- Inappropriate humor
- Intimidation
- Minimizing
- Inappropriate recognition
- Ridicule
- Taunting
- Threatening

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7. Seek questions.
 - Killer
 - QYWLTRTIOSWAY (Questions You Would Love To Respond To If Only Somebody Would Ask You)
 - Off-the-wall (Google Questions)

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Dear So and So

Dear _____,

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I have a concern/fear/question about:

Please respond by:

Telephone call Letter E-mail Intranet publication
Personal Visit Just looking into it, no response necessary

Name: _____ E-mail: _____

Department: _____ Workstation: _____

Office Phone: _____ Home Phone: _____

You may You may not use my name with this issue or question

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Dear So and So

On this section of the site, you can send questions and comments directly to me. _____ I'll be posting the most interesting questions you send, or those that stimulate the most interesting answers, in [So and So's Update](#).

My goal for this effort is to correct, clarify, and comment, as well as answer your questions as directly as I can.

Note: Questions and comments are limited to 150 words (600 characters) per message. Any attachments will be stripped away. Only the text of your comments or questions will remain. Responses to the most interesting questions will be posted at [So and So's Update](#). Thank you.

Dear So and So:

My question, concern, or fear about _____ is:

Please respond by:

Telephone call Letter E-mail
 On the website Just looking into it, no response necessary

Name (Optional): _____ E-mail: _____

Address: _____ Home Phone: _____

Street: _____ Office Phone: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

You may use my name Please keep my name private

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8. Answer all questions, appropriately.

• 75-150 words

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Response Principles

For highly emotional questions and questioners:

1. Manage the emotional dimension first.
2. Find a few useful, positive facts/obligate yourself.
3. Tell the truth/state or acknowledge the negatives.
4. Make credible comparisons (avoid analogies).
5. Try for consensus/solution.

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10 Transformational Communications Strategies

9. Recognize everyone's incremental progress.

– Four key questions for you to ask yourself everyday before you help others:

- What is the most important thing I learned today?
- What is the most interesting thing I learned today?
- What do I know now that I didn't know this morning when I arrived at work?
- Where did I make an incremental improvement today?

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The Power of a Note

- Provides a lifetime of powerful, personal recognition.
- A note versus a phone call:
 - Notes attach more importance to the well-wishing
 - Notes are a matter of record
- People need positive reinforcement.
- Four "S's" of note writing:
 - Sincere
 - Short
 - Specific
 - Spontaneous

From *The Power of a Note*, by Fred Bauer, Reader's Digest, December 1991 issue; www.rd.com.

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10. Build trust.

- Advance, timely information
- Plain language
- Invite input
- Act on input
- Apologize promptly

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**Transformation From
Manager to Leader
=
Transformation From
Manager to Communicator**

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Questions & Answers

To ask a question via
phone, please press
*1 on your telephone
keypad.

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- May 27 *How to Develop the Mindset of a Strategist*
- June 24 *Communicating Change . . . Successfully Getting to Tomorrow*

* All seminars are scheduled from 12:00 - 1:30 p.m. ET.
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To find out more about IABC programs.

Julie Freeman, *ABC, APR*, President

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Register to receive periodic updates of content and Mr. Lukaszewski's public appearance schedule.

tlg@e911.com

To contact Mr. Lukaszewski directly.

www.iabc.com

To find out more about IABC programs.

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August 22, 2007

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2. Content

3. Audio quality

4. Ease of registration

Presentator: Overall Effectiveness

5. James Lukaszewski

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What was the most important thing you learned?

Name (optional) _____ PLEASE FAX TO 1.800.672.5138 or +1.715.833.5476

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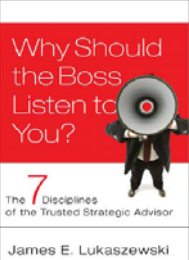
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**Thank You for Attending the IABC Web Seminar
 Wednesday, February 25, 2009**

**Transforming Managers and
 Supervisors Into Better
 Communicators,
 Even Leaders**

**By James E. Lukaszewski,
 ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA**

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Management Consultants
In Communications

TRANSFORMING MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS INTO BETTER COMMUNICATORS, EVEN LEADERS

Handout

A Web Seminar Sponsored by the
**International Association of
Business Communicators (IABC)**

Presented by
James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

Wednesday, February 25, 2009
12:00 – 1:30 p.m. EST



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- Answering Tough, Touchy, Sensitive Questions and Responding to Emotional Questioners

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COMMUNICATION INTENTIONS

1. **Candor**
 - Disclose, announce early.
 - Explain reasoning and reasons.
 - Discuss options, alternatives considered.
 - Provide unsolicited helpful information.
2. **Openness, accessibility**
 - Be available.
 - Be willing to respond.
3. **Truthfulness**
 - Point of reference matters more than facts.
 - Unconditional honesty, from the start.
4. **Apology**
 - Verbalize or write a statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow.
 - Acknowledge personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed or wronged another.
 - Humbly ask for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.
5. **Responsiveness**
 - Every concern or question, regardless of the source, is legitimate and must be addressed.
 - Answer every question; avoid judging the questioner.
 - Avoid taking any question personally.
 - Build followers and be nice, even in the face of anger or aggressive negativity. Anger and arrogance create plaintiffs.
6. **Empathy**
 - Action always speaks louder than words.
 - Action illustrates concern, sensitivity, and compassion.
 - Act as though it was happening to you or someone you care about.
7. **Transparency**
 - Our behavior, our attitude, our plans, even our strategic discussions are unchallengeable, positive, and explainable.
 - Our families would be comfortable reading about our actions, decisions, and discussions on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper.
 - No secrets (because important things and stupid stuff always come out).
8. **Engagement**
 - Face-to-face is the communications approach desired by just about everyone.
 - Those who challenge us most will require aggressive positive interaction.
 - Our base and those who give us permission to operate expect us to deal with unconvinced and victims.
 - Direct interactive response, even negotiation, empowers the initiator.
9. **Clarification and Correction**
 - Relentlessly correct and clarify the record.
 - Prompt, positive, constructive elaboration of the facts preempts critics and empowers employees and supporters.

EXPLICIT INTENTIONS

The Essential Ingredient for Communication Success

By James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA*

The main reason communication of any kind fails to connect with key audiences and constituencies is the assumption that everyone knows what you are talking about, why you are talking about it, that most of it matters and, therefore, they will pay attention. Once it becomes evident that those you are trying to reach or motivate are misinterpreting what is being said, or simply ignoring the new information, precious and expensive irreplaceable time has been lost. There then is a need to go back, somehow regroup and start again, but the initial misunderstandings may persist and cause longer timelines and less than desirable outcomes.

It is very useful, from the constituent's point of view, that you, or the leader begin your communication strategy with an explanation of your own behaviors and intentions. How else are they going to know? Before giving instructions or trying to explain to them how public relations works, or the importance of their listening or participating, it is essential to establish a mutual understanding of how your communication can accomplish something that matters both to you and to them. At the same time you are sharing the ways constituents can engage in the process, if they choose to do so.

I call this process Communication Intentions. By describing these intentions clearly and carefully, and perhaps by putting them in a convenient place for public reference such as on a website, you establish a contract with your audiences to which they can hold you accountable. At the same time, this approach puts you in a much better position to achieve your objective more promptly, more completely, while controlling the critics, bellyachers and other outside forces that are sometimes allowed to intervene because we fail to be clear about what we are doing, why we are doing it and how we intend to accomplish our objectives.

An interesting side effect of this strategy is how it controls outside interests, forces and players. In fact, to be successful these groups find they must abide by many of your intentions, or risk losing the interest and potential support of the audiences they need to defeat you or slow you down. Once these groups fall into this practice, their ability to intervene successfully and negatively is significantly reduced. Think of these intentions as the disciplines and the templates for communication success. Fail to adequately utilize or be guided by these concepts and the result is again trouble, misunderstanding, confusion and the need to go back and rework things, if there is time. Every element of your communication intention strategy has a name.

1. Candor

I define candor as “Truth with an attitude, now.” Disclose early. Announce good news or bad news as promptly as possible. Explain the reasons and the reasoning surrounding the information you are releasing or providing. Your failure to talk and explain promptly allows others to interpret your intentions and actions, and to forecast what they think you will be doing or saying. Often they will simply make things up.

Discuss the options and the alternatives you considered and provide helpful unsolicited information before someone else can do it in your place, or audiences have to ask for the

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information. Candor is among the most powerful trust building and maintaining behaviors we can undertake. Failure to be candid may be an early first sign that there are other undisclosed mistakes and errors in judgment with even graver consequences.

2. Openness and Accessibility

Be available. Be willing to talk. One of the most common complaints from most constituencies, both inside and outside, is that when important things happen, especially negative circumstances or events, those responsible are somehow inaccessible or unwilling to speak or explain. This behavior, combined with lack of candor, damages the trust relationship.

Openness and access reduce contention.

3. Truthfulness

Truth is very complex. Surely, whether it is a process, a procedure, an event, or a circumstance, what happens, happens and facts are facts. However, finding the truth is often counterintuitive. Here's an example to illustrate the complexity of truth, and some important lessons about truth that validate this perspective and why it is so important to understand the nature of truth.

Imagine a minor car accident at a residential intersection. Within minutes, a traffic policeman arrives on the scene. She discovers that four people witnessed the accident, each one standing on a different corner of the intersection. She interviews each of them separately and discovers some interesting contradictions.

One pair agrees on how the accident occurred, but their account differs from the other two. A different pair agrees on the positions of the cars and the status of the traffic signals at the time of the accident, but their account differs with the other two. A different pair agrees on the traffic conditions at the time of the accident, but their account differs from the other two. As the police officer reviewed her notes, she noticed that on most of the other details of the accident, each of the four witnesses disagrees. Welcome to the world of eyewitness testimony.

What do we know about what the four people, who witnessed the accident, told the police officer? First, we know that they are all probably telling the truth. They have no reason to lie and nothing to do with the accident itself, so the information they are sharing can be relied upon. But wait a minute. If they are all telling the truth, why do their descriptions all differ so substantially? The answer, of course, is that they all saw the accident from a different point of reference. This is a tremendously valuable insight. Truth is always about point of reference. If you think about it, truth really is less about the facts and more about perception and emotion.

I define truth as 15 percent fact and 85 percent perception and emotion. This definition explains a lot. Why is it, for example, that when people are upset about something that really concerns them, they become even angrier when additional data is provided to convince them? The reason, of course, is that facts rarely matter as much as people's perceptions and emotional involvement in the situation itself. This is why victims often seem to ignore the facts, even when they are given in order to help the victim. In reality, the victims, like most audiences, are simply acting on the truth, as they perceive it. Truth is always much more about personal perception than anything else.

Ignoring multiple perspectives is the reason for many of the errors in news accounts of events witnessed by many people. The reporter tries to put together a composite of the events they witness. Other witnesses have only what they saw as their reference. The two perceptions are often at odds.

Along with truth comes the concept of honesty. To be perceived as truthful, there must be a perception of unconditional honesty in the relationship. Any kind of conditional approach that makes it appear that you are truthful only part of the time, and something else other times, calls into question your intentions, your truthfulness and the perception of whether or not you can be trusted.

4. Responsiveness

These comments are directed more to upper and senior management. When sensitive questions arise from outsiders or insiders there is a tendency to focus on who is doing the asking rather than on the important information that could be shared if the questions were answered. This is especially the case for the more senior people in an organization. As one's level in an organization rises, one's skin tends to be thinner (they suffer fewer fools) and the resistance to answering questions hardens. This behavior and attitude can cause devastating but avoidable consequences.

The lesson is that questions and their answers are what matter most. The failure to answer questions is often perceived as an intentional failure to communicate. Failure to communicate can have toxic consequences inside and outside an organization because the only way we communicate with others is by answering their questions. It is impossible to communicate with someone who has no questions. If they don't care, you can't communicate.

The crucial secret to success, especially in serious, dangerous, treacherous, or negative situations, is answering every question and recognizing that it is the answers questions generate that matters rather than the status, education, or qualifications of the questioner. What this means is that an organization and its leaders must recognize the communication power and control, answering questions provides. To do this requires that questions are never taken personally. They come with the territory of leadership. Prompt response confers power and credibility on those who answer.

Failure to answer questions is the surest way to disturb your supporters and generate critics, negativity and opponents. Sometimes failure to answer also causes disappointment and anger. It is anger, combined with criticism, that facilitates recruitment or self-selection of new opponents. Answering questions relentlessly and positively is a critic, opponent, plaintiff and visibility reduction strategy. And most important of all, for every question you answer, six to ten of your supporters, or those who may be worried, stop caring, talking and worrying, and get on with their lives. You win faster with fewer critics.

5. Empathy

Perhaps the most common definition for empathy is the notion of, "putting yourself in someone else's shoes," or "looking at something from the other person's perspective." On issues that matter, both of these definitions fall far short of what victims and those adversely affected expect. Also, these definitions are nearly impossible to truly and genuinely accomplish. Besides, they are mostly talk. My work in many cultures reveals that in virtually every one there

is an equivalent to the English phrase, “Actions speak louder than words.” To me, empathy is action. Talk without action is spin.

Empathetic, sensitive, prompt action illustrates concern, compassion and real sensitivity. When you act as though it had actually happened to you or someone you cared about, you are making a powerful statement without having to utter a single word. Yes, critics can complain that, “It’s too little, too late,” but the fact is you acted and they just talked. Empathetic behavior reduces criticism, litigation, news value and doubts about trusting you, and your honesty.

6. Transparency

To be credible, to be respected, to be relied upon and to be trusted all require that our behavior, our attitudes, our plans and even our heated discussions are carried out in positive, unchallengeable ways, and in the open. This is because in a transparent world the stupid stuff jumps out faster than any other kind of stuff, and comes out at the worst possible time, in the worst possible light and in the most aggressively negative and damaging way.

The intention to be transparent means that our families and friends would be comfortable reading about our actions, decisions, discussions and plans on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper. In a transparent world there are no secrets. Now, more than ever before, there are more watchers and reporters just waiting to expose, disclose, humiliate and embarrass. In the Web-dominated world, today’s mistakes and misjudgments now last forever.

7. Engagement

The most powerful communication strategy at our disposal is the willingness, ability and self-imposed obligation to go face-to-face frequently and extensively. It is the approach desired by just about everyone. Those who challenge us most will require aggressive positive interaction, even if they vigorously refuse to interact face-to-face. Those in our base audiences, and those who give us permission to operate or proceed, expect us to deal with unconvinced and angry people directly, frequently and compassionately, face-to-face. Direct, interactive response, even negotiation, empowers the initiator. Failure to implement a face-to-face strategy creates more critics and victims, and corrodes your credibility and the perception that you are honest.

8. Correction or Clarification

Traditional journalism, newspapers, television and cable, and radio all face declining public trust and credibility, especially newspapers. The new media and social media are supplanting these older “Legacy Media”. The opportunity is now available for you to more effectively and quickly control your own destiny.

Public surveys by organizations such as the Pew Charitable Trust indicate that public confidence in material that appears on the Web is growing rapidly. This is true even though almost everyone who uses the Web recognizes that huge amounts of this easily available information is made up, inaccurate, intentionally negative or wrong and unstoppable. At the same time the Web also provides an extraordinary platform that enables us to present our views and opinions in full, free of editorial filters, media biases and other interference.

The Web also provides a powerful platform for correcting mistakes, errors, maliciousness and the mindless bloviating that has become so prevalent these days. In fact, I recommend that

my clients commit to relentlessly correct and clarify their own record. At every opportunity, prompt, positive, constructive elaboration of the facts and correcting perceptions preempts critics and empowers employees, supporters and anyone who associates with us. Correcting the record allows even larger numbers of people who would rather go on with their lives than to worry about you, to do so.

For the last eight to 10 years we have shown our clients how to take information that was erroneous, misleading, mistaken, or simply confusing and, through a side-by-side clarification technique, provide direct comparisons between what is being said or written about them and our client's own commentary, convictions and concerns.

Another way we provide correction and clarification is to record, digitally or on audiotape, all news interviews, public meetings, question-and-answer sessions and conversations where important issues are discussed or debated. We place both a transcript and the audio on the client's website. This technique allows everyone who cares, including family members and other important but indirectly affected persons to listen and then make up their own minds, rather than relying on the 17 to 20 words the newspaper or news outlet chooses to use. And, this listening can be done conveniently. The Web is open 24/7.

We also urge reporters to post their notes on their website for public inspection and understanding. Where there are discrepancies between what a reporter said to get an interview versus the nature of the story that was actually produced, we ask the reporter to provide commentary to help us better understand their real intentions. These notes often reveal whether actual deception took place in the construction of the story. It is very important for readers, viewers and listeners to understand the context in which stories are created—the mental state, behaviors and attitudes of reporters—just as much as it is to understand the content of the actual story produced.

Over the years, we have learned that deception rarely produces truth. In fact, deception whether through omission, commission, negligence, or carelessness is a prime ingredient in reporting errors. Using the Web, we now have the opportunity to truly control our destiny by having the last word. Because it is electronic, we can select the precise audience and constituencies whom we know need to have this information and provide it to them directly, instantly.

In an era of increasingly ubiquitous social media, the ability to respond instantly, both from the source of information and to the audiences for that information, will be crucial to maintaining constituent relationships across the board, from employees to regulators, to customers and vendors, to neighbors, to public policy makers, to retirees—to those who regulate us, to those who depend on us and to those who view us as threats. Your destiny may well depend on the speed and directness with which you respond.

Communicate intentionally, explain your guiding principles, live by those intentions and you will control your own destiny. One other thing I have noticed is that many bosses and attorneys tend to like these approaches. While they are relatively peaceful compared to the adversarial approach of many lawyers and the clash of ideas that often drives executive decision making, it is clear that waging peace is ultimately a lot less expensive than waging war, and building friends, supporters and followers is far more desirable than creating critics, angry neighbors and victims.

More than ever before, whatever is communicated needs to be communicated by an operating person who is assisted, trained and coached by a communicator. The success of these communications depends on the audience knowing, in advance, the intentions of the person or organization talking or taking action. Every executive who undertakes to work using a set of explainable communications intentions gives the communicator better access to the inner circle and more influence over how the organization and those who run it will succeed.

James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA*, is the principal of his own firm based in the United States and Of Counsel to Hope Johnston and Associates, a law firm based in Vancouver, British Columbia. His pragmatic, ethically based approaches to managing the worst problems organizations can experience has made him one of North America's pre-eminent corporate and organizational troubleshooters. Purchase his latest book, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You? The Seven Disciplines of the Trusted Strategic Advisor*, at your nearest bookstore or order it today at either www.BarnesAndNoble.com or www.Amazon.com. For more information about Jim or his collection of books, articles, CDs, and monographs, visit his Web site at www.e911.com.

LISTEN UP*

The SSOLERR System

SSOLERR is a listening technique to enhance personal communication. It can be very effective, depending on the situation, and the individuals involved. Gerald Egan recommended using an 'acronym' to help build all the components into communication with others. The SSOLERR theory has five basic components:

1. Stop what you are doing and focus.
2. Face people squarely; the bodily orientation that you adopt conveys a message that you are involved.
3. Open body shape; an open posture is generally seen as non defensive. Crossed arms or legs might convey that you do not feel involved with the individual.
4. Lean forward slightly; a slight inclination forward is taken as showing personal interest and commitment.
5. Eye contact; regular but varied eye contact is conveyed as interest in the person.
6. Relax; maintain a relaxed appearance and manner.
7. Ask reflective questions: who, what, why, where, when, and how.

SSOLERR can help to guide professional care workers when discussing sensitive information. Within the main content, active listening is essential. Active listening does not just mean listening and hearing; it involves trying to understand the meaning of the words being used by the service user and the context from which they originate. Active listening is developing an interaction with the service user that helps to identify the real issues and to provide a meaningful dialogue in exchange.

When listening, individuals can operate at three different levels. These are partial listening, well tuned in listening, and global listening. Partial listening is where some of what the service user has said registers with the understanding on the receiver. This tends to be known as Level 1 listening. Well tuned in listening is when the majority of what is being said is accepted and understood by the listener. This tends to be known as Level 2 listening. Global listening is when the receiver is able to identify fully with the person speaking and has established empathy and congruence. This is often known as Level 3 listening.

* Adapted from www.WikiAnswers.com (http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_soler_communication&alreadyAsked=1).

THE POWER OF TALK: WHO GETS HEARD AND WHY*

	Style of Talking	Unintended Consequences of Style
Sharing Credit	Uses “we” rather than “I” to describe accomplishments. <i>Why?</i> Using “I” seems too self-promoting.	Speaker doesn’t get credit for accomplishments and may hesitate to offer good ideas in the future.
Acting Modest	Downplays their certainty, rather than minimizing doubts, about future performance. <i>Why?</i> Confident behavior seems too boastful.	Speaker <i>appears</i> to lack confidence and, therefore, competence; others reject speaker’s good ideas.
Asking Questions	Asks questions freely. <i>Why?</i> Questions generate needed knowledge.	Speaker <i>appears</i> ignorant to others; if organization discourages speaker from asking questions, valuable knowledge remains buried.
Apologizing	Apologizes freely. <i>Why?</i> Apologies express concern for others.	Speaker <i>appears</i> to lack authority.
Giving Feedback	Notes weaknesses only after <i>first</i> citing strengths. <i>Why?</i> Buffering criticism saves face for the individual receiving feedback.	Person receiving feedback concludes that areas needing improvement aren’t important.
Avoiding Verbal Opposition	Avoids challenging others’ ideas, and hedges when stating own ideas. <i>Why?</i> Verbal opposition signals destructive fighting.	Others conclude that speaker has weak ideas.
Managing Up	Avoids talking up achievements with higher-ups. <i>Why?</i> Emphasizing achievements to higher-ups constitutes boasting.	Managers conclude that speaker hasn’t achieved much and doesn’t deserve recognition or promotion.
Being Indirect	Speaks indirectly rather than bluntly when telling subordinates what to do. <i>Why?</i> Blatantly directing others is too bossy.	Subordinates conclude that manager lacks assertiveness and clear thinking, and judge manager’s directives as unimportant.

* *The Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why*, from *HBR in Brief* (a Communication E-mail Newsletter publication), *Harvard Business Review School Publishing*, by Deborah Tannen, published October 30, 2008. Reprinted with permission.

Ms. Tannen’s related article, *From the Power of Talk: Who Gets Heard and Why*, was published May 1, 2002, *Harvard Business Review School Publishing*; Product Number: #: 9977-PDF-ENG. Purchase this article for \$6.50 at:

http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/b02/en/common/item_detail.jhtml;jsessionid=R1UAWJNVLEM T0AKRGWDR5VQBKE0YIISW?id=95510& requestid=45072

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STORY DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Storytelling is the second most powerful verbal communication technique in any language, in any culture. Stories that communicate have six components, no matter how brief or extended the story happens to be. The planning form below is designed to help you take communications objectives, messages, ideas, and opinions and turn them into stories that communicate based upon the attributes that all successful stories have.

SUCCESS TIPS FOR STORYTELLERS

1. *Analyze and understand* why your favorite stories work. Use the same process to perfect new stories.
2. Five *excellent sources* for story models, which help you create better stories, are:
 - *American Speaker*
 - *Bits and Pieces*
 - *Readers Digest*
 - *Storytelling Magazine*
 - *Vital Speeches of the Day*
3. *Join* the National Storytelling Association, National Speakers Association, or the Canadian Authors Association.
4. *Be alert* to good stories you hear. Jot them down, analyze why they work.
5. *Create* a story/idea folder and keep it in your desk. When you get an idea or a think of a message you'd like to get across, jot it down on a form like the sample on the right.
6. *Create* a lesson, message, or self-evident truth folder and look for stories that can serve as archives for your messages.

STORY DEVELOPMENT FORMAT

1. Message, communications objective, moral, lesson, punch line, purpose:

2. Plain language synopsis:

3. People focus, main characters:

4. Structure, sequence of events (Beginning, Middle, End):

5. Key Facts:

6. Human factors:



Using Stories as a Presentation Tool

Business presentations don't always have to be about numbers, charts, and graphs. Sometimes telling a story can help your audience grasp a concept more readily than staring at raw data.

As communications expert Jim Lukaszewski says, "A picture may be worth a thousand words, but a good story is worth 10,000 pictures." Well, maybe only 9,999. But his point is well taken. In the world of business, the ability to tell "your story" is essential — whether your story is motivational, financial, technical, or the company story.

The do's and don'ts of using stories

The following sections give you some guidelines for using stories effectively. Most of them come courtesy of Jim Lukaszewski. (He's founder of The Lukaszewski Group, Inc., a management communication consulting company based in White Plains, New York.)

Tell stories for a purpose

A story should have a reason for being told. And the reason — a lesson, moral, objective — should be obvious to the audience. One of the fastest ways to turn off a business audience is by telling pointless stories.

Tell stories about people

Face it, human beings are a narcissistic species — they like to hear stories about themselves. So if your story involves people, it gets attention. And if you can talk about people familiar to the audience, such as other industry members, even better. Here's the uncommon knowledge: If you can't talk about real individuals, talk about hypothetical people. Use names. Personify your stories. Jim guarantees that this gets your audience involved.

Try out stories first

The first time to tell a story shouldn't be when you're standing at a podium addressing your audience. You need to know how the story works. Try stories on your friends, neighbors, colleagues, and anyone willing to listen. Theoretically, the story will get

better every time. By the time you use the story in a presentation, you should have a polished gem.

Develop a repertoire of stories. Every story won't work with every audience, so having a selection of stories from which to choose is nice. Develop several stories that you feel comfortable telling; then you can fit them to your topic and your audience.

Job seekers can use that story in a presentation about interviewing techniques. Or you can use it to make a point to salespeople about being ready for the unexpected. The only limit to its use is your imagination.

Collect stories

Most people are exposed to good stories every day. You see them in the newspaper. You hear them on radio and TV. People tell them to you. Write down the stories you like. Collect them. Start a file. Then you have them at your fingertips when you need them.

Checking out different types of stories

You can use many different types of stories to liven up your presentation. Here are a few of the more common ones.

Success story

A success story documents the triumph of people, actions, or ideas. Think of the stories that you liked as a child. Most of them ended with the words "happily ever after." Those words are the sign of a success story. People like to hear stories about how an idea or action worked out successfully — especially in the business world. They're popular in any type of business presentation.

Personal story

Any time you add a personal story, you get people's attention. People are much more interested in personal stories than they are in just plain facts. A *personal story* is a tale about something that happened to you, the presenter, with your friends, colleagues, or relatives — anything that really occurred. These are the stories that you can't make up. The time your friends dared you to jump into a pond with your clothes on when you were 8 years old. The time you flipped a coin to answer true-false questions and aced a test. The time you got bumped from a flight and met someone who ended up being your biggest customer. You can use all these types of personal stories to make points in a business presentation.

What if you don't have many personal stories? Interview other people, and tell *their* stories. Getting stories from other people — coworkers, clients, vendors — is so simple to do, yet so few presenters do it. Other people's stories are a great source of material that you shouldn't overlook. (Just make sure you don't mislead your audience and claim the story as your own. And ask for permission to use this story. If the person you're telling the story about is in your audience, make sure she doesn't have any objections to you using it.)

Humorous story

A humorous story amuses your audience while making a point. It can be a funny story about your work or anything else. Humorous stories provide a great way to create rapport and get attention — as long as they don't embarrass anyone in your audience. They're particularly useful in sales presentations.

Parable

A parable is a story with a simple moral or lesson — and you don't need to be a preacher to tell one. Parables have become popular with presenters who talk about business ethics. They can also be very useful for sales and marketing presentations. (The moral of the story is that the company that didn't buy my product went bankrupt.)

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<http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/using-stories-as-a-presentation-tool.html>

BAD NEWS ERADICATOR

The Bad News Eradicator was designed to help eliminate defensive words and negative phrases from your speech and writing. Keep the document next your telephone. Take it with you when you travel. Collect your own set of habitual negative phrases and words. List them on the sheet, then create their positive equivalent and get a whole new life. The goal is to create a positive phrase that has the same or fewer words than the negative phrase.

The nature of this discipline, because that's what it is, is to constantly and relentlessly translate and transform the energy of negative language into the power of positive speech or writing. Whenever you have a moment, simply work through the list and develop equivalent positive phrases for each negative phrase. There are many ways to accomplish this; sometimes a negative phrase has a half dozen or more positive equivalent options. The goal is to eradicate the negativity and gain a whole new power over your life.

1. "Are not limited to . . . "	"Include, among others . . . "
2. "Are not associated with . . . "	"Are separate from . . . "
3. "Are not necessarily indicative."	
4. "Do not include . . . "	"Only include . . . "
5. "Does not require . . . "	
6. "Does not sufficiently substitute . . . "	
7. "Does not exceed . . . "	
8. "Does not occur . . . "	
9. "Don't hesitate to call."	"Please call."
10. "Doesn't hurt to ask."	
11. "Don't worry, he won't care."	
12. "Employees who no longer have an ownership . . . "	
13. "Entitled, but not obligated, to..."	
14. "Generally does not vary."	"Generally is consistent."
15. "Have not been registered . . . "	
16. "Have not yet made . . . "	
17. "He is not happy about this."	"He'd rather see . . . "
18. "He's not deranged . . . anymore."	
19. "I can't comment on the past . . . I wasn't there."	"What I can tell you is . . . "
20. "I can't comment on what hasn't happened."	
21. "I can't say for sure."	
22. "I can't speak for them."	
23. "I couldn't help it."	
24. "I don't believe you."	
25. "I don't disagree."	
26. "I don't know."	"Here's what I know . . . "
27. "I don't like that idea."	"Let's try this . . . "
28. "I don't mean to apologize."	
29. "I don't see the connection."	
30. "I wouldn't say that."	"What I would say is . . . "
31. "I wouldn't say you couldn't do that."	
32. "It is disappointing and misleading."	

33. “If adequate funds are not available.”	“If we need additional funds . . . ”
34. “If either of these events had not occurred . . . ”	
35. “If you can’t refrain from . . . ”	
36. “If you do not refrain from . . . ”	“Stop doing . . . ”
37. “If you do not wish . . . ”	
38. “Investors are strongly cautioned not to place any reliance...”	
39. “Is not eligible . . . ”	“Here’s what’s eligible . . . ”
40. “It can't be done.”	
41. “It didn't happen that way.”	
42. “It is unable to . . . ”	
43. “It never happened.”	
44. “It was unceremoniously rejected.”	
45. “It wasn’t a good idea then, and it isn’t any better now.”	
46. “It wasn’t our intent to not be involved.”	
47. “It won’t be any trouble at all.”	
48. “It won’t be that way.”	
49. “It won't work.”	
50. “It's not against company policy.”	
51. “It's never been done before.”	
52. “It's not inappropriate.”	
53. “It's not my responsibility.”	
54. “It’s not the same.”	
55. “It’s not unreasonable.”	
56. “It's not too expensive.”	
57. “It's not too much trouble.”	
58. “It’s unlikely that he won’t disagree.”	
59. “It’s not unlikely that people will come up with something we won’t do.”	
60. “Let’s not be negative.”	
61. “May not make changes.”	“Changes are limited to . . . ”
62. “May not be covered.”	
63. “Misrecollection is not impossible.”	
64. “Most likely to not achieve.”	
65. “Must not be an ineligible corporation.”	
66. “My answer is not no.”	
67. “No.”	
68. “No acquisitions are currently proposed.”	
69. “No amendment may be made.”	
70. “No, clearly we’re not doing it now.”	
71. “No comment.”	
72. “No conflict of interest.”	
73. “No increase or decrease is planned.”	
74. “No, it’s not wrong.”	
75. “No problem.”	
76. “No revenue was generated.”	
77. “Not affiliated with . . . ”	“Affiliations are these . . . ”
78. “Not my job, unfortunately.”	
79. “Not permitted to be . . . ”	

80.	“Not that again.”	“Let’s move on.”
81.	“Nothing is impossible.”	“Everything is possible.”
82.	“Nothing was done.”	
83.	“Notwithstanding the general limitations . . . ”	
84.	“Options are not exercisable.”	
85.	“Our boss would never buy it.”	
86.	“Our customers wouldn’t like it.”	
87.	“Our participation was never greater than theirs.”	
88.	“Our people would never do that.”	
89.	“Shouldn’t you have objected?”	
90.	“Some of which will not materialize.”	
91.	“That isn’t our problem.”	
92.	“That wouldn’t work.”	
93.	“That’s impossible.”	
94.	“That’s not a bad approach.”	
95.	“That’s not a good question.”	
96.	“That’s not been proven.”	
97.	“That’s not our fault.”	
98.	“That’s not to say we can’t do it.”	
99.	“That’s not true.”	“Here’s what’s true . . . ”
100.	“That’s not our perspective.”	
101.	“That’s partly untrue.”	
102.	“That’s the wrong attitude.”	
103.	“That’s unhelpful and unnecessary.”	
104.	“The allegations are false, misleading, libelous, and absurd.”	
105.	“The company does not expect, nor can it guarantee . . . ”	
106.	“The company does not plan to . . . ”	“The company plans to . . . ”
107.	“The company has the right, but not the obligation.”	
108.	“The company makes no representation or warranty . . . ”	“The company warrants to . . . ”
109.	“The company shall not terminate . . . ”	
110.	“The company shall not take any of the following actions.	
111.	“The company will be under no duty to give notification.”	
112.	“The company would not be able to . . . ”	
113.	“The forecasts should not be regarded as a representation.”	
114.	“The increasing inability . . . ”	
115.	“The information is not exhaustive.”	
116.	“The option may not be exercised . . . “	
117.	“The statements were not prepared with a view toward compliance.”	
118.	“There can be no assurance.”	
119.	“These committees do not set the final policy . . . ”	

120.	“They will have no further rights.”	
121.	“This is not about contract negotiation; we’re not talking about that.”	
122.	“This was not a regular occurrence.”	“A more likely occurrence is . . . ”
123.	“Unable to attain.”	
124.	“Unable to complete.”	
125.	“Undue reliance should not be placed on . . . ”	
126.	“Unvested options may not vest...”	
127.	“We aren't a bad company.”	
128.	“We can't change that fast.”	
129.	“We can't say that.”	
130.	“We can't talk about it.”	
131.	“We categorically deny that.”	
132.	“We couldn't have known.”	
133.	“We decided not to do it.”	
134.	“We did all right without it.”	
135.	“We didn't circumvent the rules.”	
136.	“We didn't engage in that practice.”	
137.	“We didn't know.”	
138.	“We didn't need to do that.”	“What we should have done was . . . ”
139.	“We don't agree it's unnecessary or unwarranted.”	
140.	“We don't care.”	
141.	“We don't have enough studies.”	
142.	“We don't have the resources.”	
143.	“We don't have the time.”	
144.	“We don't see it that way.”	
145.	“We meant nothing of the kind.”	
146.	“We never did that.”	
147.	“We shouldn't get involved.”	
148.	“We won't have the money.”	“Money will be limited.”
149.	“We're just too busy; we can't.”	
150.	“We're not capable of that.”	
151.	“We're not ready for that.”	
152.	“Were not approved or disapproved.”	“It remains to be approved.”
153.	“Why won't you use everything I say?”	
154.	“Will not be allowed to . . . ”	
155.	“Will not be revoked.”	
156.	“Will not become exercisable.”	
157.	“You can't believe that.”	
158.	“You can't make a mistake.”	
159.	“You have nothing to fear.”	
160.	“You may not take such information out.”	“Information you can remove is limited to . . . ”

**COLOR WORDS:
Words That Victimize, Punish, and Hurt**

Afraid	Delinquent	Harmful	Sad
Agitated	Demean	Hateful	Sarcastic
Aggravate	Deny	Hopeless	Scared
Alarmed	Despair	Hostile	Scum
Alleged	Desperation	Humiliated	Self-pity
Anger	Despicable	Hurt	Selfish
Angry	Destroy	Icky	Sellout
Anguish	Destructive	Idiot	Sham
Antagonize	Deteriorate	Ignorant	Shame
Anxious	Disappointed	Immature	Shameful
Apathetic	Disarray	Incompetent	Shatter
Appalled	Discontented	Inept	Sick
Apprehensive	Discouraged	Inappropriate	Silly
Argue	Discriminate	Irritated	Sissy
Arrogant	Disdain	Lies	Skunk
Ashamed	Disgusted	Litigate	Slander
Assassinate	Dismiss	Lousy	Slash
Attack	Disrespect	Mad	Sloppy
Awful	Distorted	Mangled	Stinky
Bad	Distraught	Mangy	Struggle
Betrayed	Disturbed	Manipulate	Stupid
Blame	Dopey	Mean	Surrender
Blasted	Doubtful	Meek	Tampering
Bombs	Dumb	Messy	Tarnish
Bored	Duplicity	Minimize	Tense
Botched	Ecotage	Miserable	Terrible
Brainwashed	Embarrassed	Monopoly	Terrified
Bungled	Embattled	Nag	Terror-stricken
Buried	Endanger	Negligent	Terrorized
Capitulate	Enraged	Out-of-touch	Threatened
Catastrophic	Evil	Overwhelmed	Toxic
Collusion	Eviscerate	Overzealous	Tragic
Conceal	Excessive	Outrageous	Traitor
Confused	Exaggerate	Painful	Tumultuous
Conspire	Exposed	Panicky	Ugly
Contempt	Face-saving	Petrified	Unbelievable
Corrosive	Fat	Pitiful	Uncomfortable
Cover-up	Fearful	Poisonous	Underhanded
Cringe	Fight	Profiteering	Undermine
Critical	Foolish	Questionable	Uneasy
Crooked	Frightened	Racist	Unhappy
Curious	Frustrating	Regret	Unimportant
Damaging	Furious	Repudiate	Unlucky
Danger	Goofy	Resentful	Unnecessary
Deadly	Gratuitous	Resigned	Unreal
Deceitful	Greedy	Rip-off	Unsure
Defeated	Guilty	Rotten	Weird
Defective	Harassed	Sabotage	Worried
Defensive			

POWER WORDS

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Aggressive | 22. Needed |
| 2. Attack | 23. New |
| 3. Candid | 24. Powerful |
| 4. Clear | 25. Prevent |
| 5. Crucial | 26. Prioritize |
| 6. Critical | 27. Protect |
| 7. Defend | 28. Purposeful |
| 8. Detect | 29. Responsible |
| 9. Deter | 30. Sensible |
| 10. Different | 31. Simple |
| 11. Direct | 32. Sincere |
| 12. Emphasize | 33. Strong |
| 13. Empathize | 34. Surprised |
| 14. Energize | 35. Tender |
| 15. Essential | 36. Tough |
| 16. Exciting | 37. Truthful |
| 17. Fascinating | 38. Unique |
| 18. Forceful | 39. Unusual |
| 19. Important | 40. Urgent |
| 20. Legitimize | 41. Valuable |
| 21. Necessary | |

THREE KINDS OF QUESTIONS

There are only three kinds of questions—three and only three:

1. Questions you never ever want to respond to.
2. Questions you would love to respond to if only someone would ask.
3. “There but for the grace of God go I” questions.

Here is a bit about each:

1. **Questions You Never Ever Want To Respond To:**

Generally these are questions that 1) involve us in making unnecessary or inappropriate comments because of incomplete or unverified information; 2) involve litigation (our own legal actions or lawsuits filed against us), proprietary, or classified information; 3) include information that will hurt those involved or require us to disparage others, speculate, or make forecasts we are unqualified to make; or 4) embarrass us, make us angry, or are questions that we just don't like.

2. **Questions You Would Love to Respond to if Only Someone Would Ask You:**

Because reporters don't really know or care about your business (because they can't know or care about it), they can't ask the kind of questions we would really like to respond to, but they can come close with help. In advance, think about the kinds of questions to which we would like to respond and develop appropriate answers. We can bridge to them when reporters use their customary questioning techniques. But remember, we need to do this preparation before the interview takes place. The last time we want to practice bridging to your better answers – for the first time – is when the interview itself occurs.

3. **Off-the-Wall Questions/Google Questions:**

In more than half of all news media interviews conducted each year, the interview subject is asked about topics, issues, and questions that relate to another company or person in their industry, business, or circumstance. Expect that you will be asked these kinds of questions. Why? Because reporters can quickly search the Web and read the morning newspapers before they come and talk to you. So on the days you are going to be interviewed, be sure that you too read the newspapers, watch the early morning television news programs, and look yourself up on the Web. Many, if not most of the reporter's questions will be based on these sources.

DEAR SO AND SO COPY

Dear _____,

I have a concern/fear/question about:

Please respond by:

Telephone call
Personal Visit

Letter
Just looking into it, no response necessary

E-mail

Intranet publication

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Department: _____

Workstation: _____

Office Phone: _____

Home Phone: _____

You may

You may not use my name with this issue or question

Dear So and So

On this section of the site, you can send questions and comments directly to me, _____. I'll be posting the most interesting questions you send, or those that stimulate the most interesting answers, at [So and So's Update](#)

My goal for this effort is to correct, clarify, and comment, as well as answer your questions as directly as I can.

Note: Questions and comments are limited to 150 words (800 characters) per message. Any attachments will be stripped away. Only the text of your comments or questions will remain. Responses to the most interesting questions will be posted at [So and So's Update](#). Thank you.

Dear So and So:

My question, concern, or fear about _____ is:

↑

↓


Please respond by:

- Telephone call Letter E-mail
 On the website Just looking into it, no response necessary

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The
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Management Consultants
In Communications

ANSWERING TOUGH, TOUCHY, SENSITIVE QUESTIONS AND RESPONDING TO EMOTIONAL QUESTIONERS[©]

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INTRODUCTION

Presenters often say that the easy part of presentations is handling questions and answers during and at the end of their talks. This enthusiasm is tempered severely when they encounter situations that are extremely difficult and tension filled, usually when the questioner is emotional, irritating, or intentionally trying to embarrass the presenter or disrupt the proceedings. Handling emotional questions is often grueling and gut wrenching.

Emotional questions and emotional responses are most likely when the issues being raised involve health and safety; property values; and quality of life issues such as peace of mind, freedom from fear, and pride in community or family. These issues are mostly emotion driven.

The questions themselves may be relatively straightforward. It is the emotionalization of the question, or bringing up sensitive topics, that leads to presenter discomfort and, perhaps, a feeling of inadequacy, even fear, in dealing with these situations.

A SEVEN-STEP PROCESS

Remember, every question is important since communication occurs only when someone asks a question and there is an opportunity to answer. Use this seven-step process to respond effectively, humanely, and appropriately to emotionally charged situations. It's a process because the steps impose a purpose, order, and helpful structure for the presenter's answers and, like most process approaches to communication, tend to de-emotionalize the situation.

Step One: Manage the Emotional Dimension First

React to the people, animal, and living system dimensions of the question first. If questioners are angry, acknowledge their anger; if questioners are fearful, acknowledge their fear; and if questioners are upset, acknowledge their discomfort.

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Examples: “That’s an important question.” “We all can understand why you’re so concerned.” “Health issues are among the most important concerns for each of us.” “I’m sorry you’re so uncomfortable; let me see if I can provide some useful information.” “I’ve heard this truly important question asked and answered a number of times; let me see if I can be of some help.” “Let’s talk it through.”

Step Two: *Give Control to Others*

Emphasize restrictions, controls, regulations, monitoring, oversight, and continuous disclosure ahead of other issues and concerns, or the typical corporate self-forgiving, self-congratulatory language.

Examples: “This may be among the largest facilities of its kind, but it will be one of the most heavily regulated, observed, and monitored.” “The controls, restrictions, and regulations imposed on our operations will be monitored by outside, independent organizations for compliance.” “Independent monitoring combined with public disclosure will provide everyone who’s interested with moment-to-moment information.” “As time passes, we fully expect tough new regulations and even more rigorous restrictions and controls to be imposed.”

Examples to Avoid: Anything that begins with, “We are proud of,” “The facts are,” “This is the only way,” “There are no alternatives,” “It’s only an isolated incident,” “There’s no reason to be fearful,” or “There will be no difference.”

Step Three: *Find a Few Useful Positive Facts / Obligate Yourself*

One of the key lessons of managing emotional situations is recognizing that facts are of only limited value. The inclination of most business people and managers is to pile on the data, believing that objectively produced information, which would convince any rational person, will convince someone in an emotional state. The rule is that data is important but only effective when you can balance the emotional component. Yes, facts and data are important but far less so than dealing directly and empathetically with the emotional issues being faced.

Examples: “There are studies that acknowledge the issue you raise and provide helpful information, such as . . . ” “Our experts have been telling us . . . ” “We have really looked into this question deeply, and the information we have developed says . . . ” “This is independent information that shows . . . ” “We’re responsible for explaining everything we’ve proposed.” “You can count on us because it’s our obligation to . . . ” “When you have questions or issues, we’re just a phone call or visit away.” “We will find an answer to your question.”

Step Four: *State a Useful Positive Benefit, Gently*

Emphasize how important your information may be to the individual’s situation and, perhaps, other sources that might help the individual feel better and have more information.

Examples: “While this will be among the largest facilities of its type; it will also be one of the most heavily regulated and controlled facilities of its type.” “As a condition of obtaining permission, there will be permanent oversight by independent, outside individuals and organizations to ensure that promises made are promises kept.”

“Questions like yours have triggered enormously helpful and serious research to find answers.” “This permit or public decision will be made only after the community is satisfied that it has imposed sufficient restrictions, regulations, oversight, and controls.”

With limited enthusiasm: “Some jobs will be created in . . . ” “The economic benefit will be substantial.” “The local economy will benefit by . . . ”

Step Five: *Tell the Truth / State or Acknowledge the Negatives:*

Address the health, environmental, and community issues forthrightly.

Examples: “From our perspective, we are doing everything we can to address the issues you are raising, and the proof will be when we . . . ” “Yes, the trains will be longer; there will be more emissions in these areas, but there will also be fewer pollutants by thousands of tons.” “Overall mercury will decline 37 percent; however, the use of Western coal will raise the emission of mercury by about X pounds per year over present levels.”

Step Six: *Make Credible Comparisons*

Accommodate personal feelings; try to avoid analogies by instead comparing “appropriate” and “like” situations and facts. “What other information can we provide?”

Examples: “A plant of similar size, but gas powered, employs 34 people versus 120 people for coal-fueled units.” “Comparing coal-fueled plants to gas-fueled plants: The coal-fueled plants cost more to build, but the operating and expense elements are approximately the same. It’s the extraordinary spiking and relentless growth of gas prices that makes coal the better choice.”

Step Seven: *Consensus/Solution (Optional)*

If you are particularly successful in communicating with the individual or group on the emotional issue, you could move toward an acknowledged mutual understanding by suggesting positions or answers the emotional, adversarial questioner might see as mutually beneficial or that would move the process ahead.

Examples: “Have I responded to the issues that were making you uncomfortable?” “What was most important from your perspective?” “Has what I said been helpful?” “Was there anything that you found especially useful?” “If we modify X or Y in the manner you suggest, would that help you feel less concerned?” “What specifically would resolve your questions?”

SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS

1. **Focus Forward:** Always answer the question as though it was the first time you have heard it, even if you just answered the same question a few minutes before. Rather than directing people back to the content of your presentation or remarks, treat the question as if it were brand new and answer it from the stand point of now, and what’s next. This will help you avoid the use of negative language.
2. **Stay Positive:** The greatest emotional trigger in adversarial situations is the use of negative language or negative responses such as: “That’s not true,” “I never said that,” “That’s not what I meant,” “You weren’t listening,” “That’s not our fault,” “We didn’t mean it that way,” “That couldn’t happen,” and “We would never do that.”

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Find the positive alternative in every case, or you stoke the fires of emotion and antagonism.

3. ***Put Yourself in Their Shoes Every Time:*** The ability to have this level of empathetic response is one of the most important aspects of moving through an emotional questioning situation.
4. ***Control Your Own Emotions:*** Avoid taking inflammatory language and emotionally charged words, such as “ashamed,” “embarrassed,” “humiliated,” “bad,” “ugly,” “weird,” “worried,” and “scum,” personally. They are just words. Instead, move to answer the question and counteract your emotional reaction by focusing on a positive declarative response.
5. ***Always Worry When They Throw Sticks and Stones:*** Words rarely hurt unless you let them.
6. ***Defuse the Situation:*** “Let’s talk it through.” “Let’s look at the situation step-by-step.” “Let’s examine your question systematically, one element at a time.”

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DISCUSSION OUTLINE

Transforming Managers and Supervisors Into Better Communicators, Even Leaders

*IABC Web Seminar
Wednesday, February 25, 2009*

If those who listened to this program with you would like to have a follow-up discussion, here are some questions to begin the conversation:

1. What do you know now that you didn't know when the program began?
2. What's the most important concept or idea you learned from this program?
3. What question has the presentation raised for which you need to find answers?
4. What key skills, ideas, or knowledges did this program confirm for you?
5. Based on what you learned and heard today, what is the first thing you're going to do when you return to your office?
6. What's the second thing you're going to do?

JAMES E. LUKASZEWSKI, ABC, APR, FELLOW PRSA

James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) advises, coaches, and counsels the men and women who run very large corporations and organizations through extraordinary problems and critical high-profile circumstances. The bulk of his practice is in the Western Hemisphere, although he has clients from many parts of the world.

He is an expert in managing and reducing contention, counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications issues. He counsels companies facing serious internal and external problems involving: activist counteraction; community conflict and grassroots campaigns; corporate relations failures; reputational threats; employee relationship building; ethics/integrity/compliance; litigation visibility; Web-based attacks; and threats to corporate survival. His broad-based experience ranges from media-initiated investigations to product recalls and plant closings, from criminal litigation to takeovers. He is frequently retained by senior management to directly intervene and manage the resolution of corporate problems and bad news. The situations he helps resolve often involve conflict, controversy, community action or activist opposition. Almost half of his practice involves civil and criminal litigation.

He is a teacher, thinker, coach, and trusted advisor with the unique ability to help executives look at problems from a variety of sensible, constructive, principled perspectives. He teaches clients how to take appropriate, highly focused, ethically appropriate action. He has personally counseled, coached, and guided thousands of executives in organizations large and small from many cultures representing government; the military and defense industry; the agriculture, banking, computer, financial, food processing, health care, insurance, paper, real estate development and telecommunications industries; cooperatives; trade and professional associations; and non-profit agencies. He is a coach to many CEOs.

Jim helps prepare spokespersons for crucial public appearances, local and network news interviews including *20-20*, *60 Minutes*, *Dateline NBC*, and *Nightline*, and for financial analyst meetings and legislative and congressional testimony. He also provides personal coaching for executives in trouble, or facing career-defining problems and succession issues.

He is a prolific author (six books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), trainer, counselor, and public speaker. He is a member of *Public Relations Review's* Board of Professionals, a contributing editor for *Public Relations Quarterly*, member of InfoCom's *Media Relations Insider* editorial advisory board, frequent columnist and member of *PR News's* editorial board, columnist for *O'Dwyer's PR Services Report*, columnist for PRSA's magazine, *The Strategist*. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies that Reduce the Media's Power*, remains a classic work in the field of direct communication. The Public Relations Society of America published the final volume of his four-volume *Executive Action® Crisis Communication Management System* in 2005: *War Stories and Crisis Communication Strategies, An Anthology*; *Crisis Communication Planning Strategies, A Workbook*; *Crisis Communication Plan Components and Models: Crisis Communication Management Readiness*; and *Media Relations During Emergencies, A Guide*. His newest book, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?*, was published by Jossey-Bass in February 2008. He has published 25 monographs on critical communication subjects since 1994 and hundreds of articles throughout his career.

He is an internationally recognized speaker on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs, and reputation preservation and restoration. His recent addresses include the 2007 conferences of the U.S. Air Force Public Affairs Officers, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Information Officers Association, Puerto Rico PR Association, ABERJE in São Paulo, Brazil, Health PR & Marketing Society, Media Relations Summit, the College & University PR Association, Choice Hotels Annual Convention, CCEP World Conference on Disaster Management, National Air & Waste Management Association, National School Public Relations Association, and Syracuse University; and the 2006, 2007, and 2008 International Conferences of IABC, the Public Relations Society of America, and ASIS International. He has addressed several Canadian trade and government conferences including the National Agriculture Awareness, the Government of Canada Communicators, and most recently Natural Resources Canada, Service Canada, Transport Canada, Purchasing Management Association of Canada, and the Canadian Investor Relations Institute. Visiting his Web site, www.e911.com, is like attending the University of Crisis Management.

An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR), Mr. Lukaszewski is a member of the PRSA's College of Fellows (Fellow PRSA); Board of Ethics & Professional Standards; the Corporate and Public Affairs/Government Sections; and the New York City and Westchester/Fairfield Chapters. He is a member of the International Churchill Society, ASIS International, and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). He lectures annually at the U.S. Marine Corp's East Coast Commander's Media Training Symposium and was the second recipient of its Drew Middleton Award. He is the recipient of Ball State University's National Public Relations Achievement Award, Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to PRSA, *PR News* Lifetime Achievement Award, Lloyd B. Dennis Distinguished Leadership Award, and named 2007 Minnesota Metropolitan State University Alumnus of the Year and the 2007 Practitioner of the Year by the Southern New England chapter of the PRSA.

Lukaszewski received his BA in 1974 from Metropolitan State University in Minnesota. He is a former deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Economic Development and assistant press secretary to former Minnesota Governor Wendell Anderson. He founded Minnesota-based Media Information Systems Corporation in 1978. Prior to founding The Lukaszewski Group Inc. in 1989 he was senior vice president and director of Executive Communication Programs for Georgeson & Company and a partner with Chester Burger Company, both in New York City. His biography is listed in several editions of Marquis *Who's Who in America*. His name was listed in *Corporate Legal Times* as one of "28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose," and in *PR Week* as one of 22 "crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis."