

October / November / December 2003

**TO: Executive Addressed**

**FR: James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA Chairman**

**RE: Avoiding Message Boredom and Mindless Editing**

One of the most predictable aspects of large or long-term communication projects is frequent minor modifications to existing messages. It's a syndrome ? message boredom ? that mostly affects communicators: say something three times and we feel the need to change or edit it. Manage the damage these frequent minor message changes can cause:

Lesson #1 Changing the messages frequently gets on the nerves of operating people, who are used to a manual that doesn't change except for very powerful reasons such as to avoid death or dismemberment.

Lesson #2 If we expect others to get and stay on message, we have to enforce message discipline on ourselves first. This means that messages are changed or added to only for the most fundamentally sound reasons:

- The change makes the message more understandable in ways that are truly meaningful from the audience perspective.
- The change makes the message more unchallengeable or more pre-emptive, or the lesson of the message more conclusive.
- The change retains the positive persuasive simplicity of the original.
- The change is truly necessary, or adds substantive intensity.
- Without the change some crucial point or convincing element of our argument will be lost or damaged.

Lesson #3 Any change must pass the straight-face test for being corporate jargon free, industry-speak free, or free of the stuff we love to say but no one else cares about or can truly understand; or it must eliminate vacuous or legally insignificant language.

During large communication projects such as facility siting, high-profile problems, major litigation, public hearings, or legislative processes, answer questions meaningfully, sooner rather than later, with consistent messages as your fundamental response platform.

Spokesperson boredom leads to mindless editing. Channel this energy into answer development. Real message insights come from the exercise of answering questions and thoroughly understanding, from the audience perspective, the body of knowledge needed to win internal and external support, neutrality, or

action. Changing the message means changing the script. Constant editing leads to scriptural deviation. Heaven knows we wouldn't want our spokespersons out there doing that.

If you'd like more information or equally interesting views, ideas, and concepts, visit the author's Web site at [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com).

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