

January/February/March 1995

**TO: Executive Addressed**

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

**RE: The Realities and Lessons of Activist Communications**

The confrontational character of present day anti-corporate activism is designed to create a negative perception of management's postures and attitudes. To counter these perceptions, management must communicate much more aggressively during activist attack. Here are some common sense guidelines to keep in mind:

1. Use disciplined, focused, responsive communication:
  - Keep the focus on getting a positive result.
  - Get and keep negotiations out of the ditch.
  - Reduce wild goose chases (don't take so much so personally).
  - Control visceral response to emotional language.
2. Responsive communication recognizes the emotional nature of activist communication. It means understanding the emotional vocabulary of the conversation and responding in relentlessly positive, constructive ways.
3. Only sticks and stones really break bones . . . words shouldn't, but often do.
4. Even the most benevolent management, when challenged, usually tries to shoot the messenger . . . , communicators need to wear bulletproof underwear.
5. We assume our critics know how weak our resolve is.
6. Our critics assume we are as committed to winning as they are . . . , our ineptness is a surprise.
7. Neither the public, the media, nor government will force a settlement until we build the necessary support among our employees, public opinion and those most directly affected, and we have met with our adversaries.

One of the great lessons in activist counteraction communications is that if we talk about war, act like we're going to war, and then get ready for war . . . there will be war. There are more important internal messages than war. Don't get sucked into war . . . wage peace.

- Confrontation can't be eliminated, but it can be modified, controlled, mitigated and anticipated.
- Negotiation face-to-face by a handful of people is the only way an agreement will be ultimately achieved. But remember, reporters, editors, politicians, and activists don't sign agreements or contracts.
- Healing must begin from the moment the confrontation and adversarial environments begin developing.

The Lukaszewski Group Inc. ■ Ten Bank Street, Suite 530, White Plains, NY 10606-1952  
Telephone 914.681.0000 ■ Facsimile: 914.681.0047 ■ [tlg@e911.com](mailto:tlg@e911.com) ■ [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com)