

July/August/September 1998

**TO: Executive Addressed**

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

**RE: Using Fact Power to Organize Senior Management Into a Focused, Motivated, Productive, Thinking, Decision-Making, Operational Team When Crisis Occurs**

You've just learned from a reporter of a major government investigation of your organization. There will be victims. You're not ready, but you must act. What happens next? Get the facts, all the facts.

Fact power will focus senior management's decision making strategically, the lawyer's too, reduce mistakes, and open the way for better crisis communication management. You'll have to gather all this information at some point in time. Why not immediately?

1. ***Begin a log.*** List who you talk with, what you talk about, questions asked, issues raised, specific actions taken by the company, government, customers, employees, and the media. Include names, telephone numbers; fax numbers, E-mail addresses, response information, and follow-up commitments.
2. ***Create a detailed chronology of events.*** All dates are relevant; key actions should be traceable. Essential to your approach is the ability to recall, with consistency but without hesitation or confusion, who did what, to whom, and when.
3. ***Establish a database of key contacts.*** Knowing how to find everyone from the Chairman of the company to the Marketing Vice President's secretary is critical. Identify those people who are important to the situation and develop a contact list that includes office phone, office fax, E-mail address, home phone, home fax, vacation home phone and fax, car/cellular phone, pager, and secretary's office and home phone. Be sure to identify an appropriate backup for key decision-makers. Get their numbers, too.
4. ***Identify the most likely collateral damage scenarios,*** the secondary and tertiary incidents the main event triggers. Evaluate probabilities: management turnover; high-visibility, prolonged litigation; government intervention; and even indictments. Include responsibility for employee concerns and victim management.
5. ***Prioritize operational response and preemption steps.*** What specific tasks need to be completed to stabilize the situation? Do you need to halt production of a product? Put a manager on unpaid leave? Notify a government agency? Begin a recall? Tend to the victims? Help employees? Assist those who are victims by association?

Support operational efforts with appropriate fact-based communication. Up-front communication diminishes news value more quickly than delayed response. Evaluate carefully. Short, positive, declarative, factual statements can be very powerful.

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