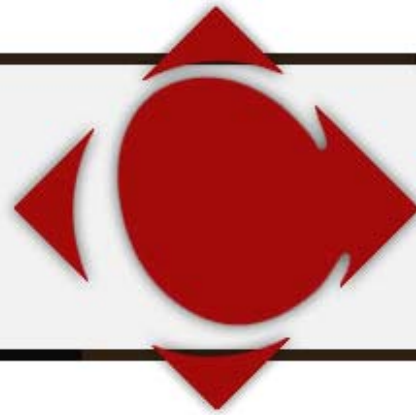


The Good, The Bad, The Spin

A Blog About Public Relations



You are the Table: An interview with Jim Lukaszewski, part 2 of 8

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Q: What happens if, as a public relations professional, you see communications disconnects in your senior leadership? For example, maybe your CEO is not a good communicator or is somebody who goes around and shoots him or herself in the foot all the time.



Jim Lukaszewski: The rest of the book, the discipline, has to do with the question: What do you have to know how to do to have the influence you want to have? The questions the book answers are: How do I get to the table? How do I get to the inner circle? How do I get next to the person to heed the advice I think I have to offer? What is the secret to doing that?

The first premise of the book is that every problem is a management problem before it's anything else. The second premise of the book is that you are the table. If you want to have this role, then you need to learn how to do this to get there. There are things you need to know how to do to be able to get there to give the advice that's necessary to change how managers manage and how leaders lead.

Your question was, "What if you've got a guy who is a bad communicator?" Sure, you're going to walk in the door and say, "You're a bad a communicator and here's how you'd fix it," but why would they listen to you? What good role do you have, or play, to be listened to by these people? Obviously, there's going to be something you need to know more to have the impact you want to have.

The second part of the book is about the seven disciplines that are really the answer to the question you just asked. How do you have the effect on these people to make a poor communicator a better communicator? Each of these seven disciplines has to do with how you, in essence, rebuild yourself to be able to have the clout and have the impact that gets people to listen to you. For example, when you say your boss is a bad communicator, to me, what is the purpose of the communication? What is bad about what the person is doing?

I'll tell you a quick story: Many years ago, I was working with a large telecommunications company and they had a chairman who was from Texas. Now, the

company was based in Connecticut and the communicators in Connecticut are all very accomplished people.

This guy was kind of a hayseed because he was from Texas. His name was Rocky. He was in charge of a \$7-billion-dollar company. They were going to do a week's worth of broadcasts on this guy's life and they were very concerned about this, so they hired me to coach Rocky to put him through media training and all this other stuff.

He was a very busy guy. The most I could get for time from him was two-and-a-half-hour to three-hour blocks of time. The first one was up in where the company's headquarters was, and I was there ready to go. Rocky didn't show. The next possible time to do this was in San Francisco on his schedule.

So I went to San Francisco a couple of weeks later, also to do this, and Rocky doesn't show. The next time was in Plano, Texas. I went to Plano and got set up, ready to go and Rocky didn't show. The final time is Friday before the Monday they're going to start taping the program. It's the last time I can work with Rocky.

I'm set up for three hours on a Friday afternoon and two hours and 45 minutes into this time period, he shows up. I know who he is and he knows who I am. He walks up and says, "Hey, James. I suppose you figured out that I've been ducking these sessions." I said, "Rocky, I kind of get the picture."

I said, "Just to tell you, I have a lot of your money for doing no work, frankly." He says, "I know that, Jim, but I have to tell you, I've been married to my wife for 49 years and when I told her that I was coming to work with you and that you were going to give me some training, she says, 'Hell, Rocky, I've been married to you for damn near 50 years and I haven't been able to train you to do anything. What can one guy you hardly know do in three hours?'"

I said, "Rocky, what I had in mind was to do a little coaching for the broadcast." Rocky says, "Coaching? Gee, I can always use a little coaching." We spent 15 minutes together, really, that's all the time we had, and the guy did the broadcast. They sent me the tapes of the broadcast and said, "I want you to do a written analysis of the tapes so we can talk to Rocky about how he needs to improve as a spokesperson for the company."

I looked at one tape, took a quick glance at another tape and I called them and said, "Listen, I'm not writing any report. This guy is terrific. The minute he opens his mouth, they believe him. This is why he's so trusted on the street. They don't care if he wears cowboy boots and talks like a guy from south Texas.

"This guy makes promises he delivers on. He tells the truth every single time. He's more truthful than you guys are. You want a report? You're going to have to ask somebody else to write it because, I'm telling you, you can learn from this guy so pay attention to him."

One of the issues in giving advice to people who have "communication problems" is, are they really bad communicators?

In the context of where Rocky's working, this guy is sensational. Now, the people who are working with him are very good at this, but they fail to recognize, really, what this guy knows he needs to do to have trust from the street. There's a big difference between someone being a bad communicator in a communicator's view and in the view of the world this guy works in.

What I'm talking about in this book is, really, you have to recognize the context of the communication before you can just indict somebody who's being a bad communicator. There's just a lot more to it than just walking in off the street and shooting from the hip, saying, "Hey, you can be better."

We can all be better. These guys hired me to do training and I knew this from the start. When you coach at this level, when you want to coach in the big times, so to speak, in the big show, it's coaching—it's not training.

They should never need training anymore. They've already been there. They're making more money than you ever will. They have more responsibility than you'll ever have. They affect more lives than you ever will as a communicator. There's a lot here in this story about the example you gave of a supposedly bad communicator.

* * *

Jim's new book, [Why Should the Boss Listen to You: The Seven Disciplines of the Trusted Strategic Advisor](#), will be released mid-February. Copies may be preordered at [Amazon.com](#). Jim may be reached at www.e911.com.

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