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HOW TO ESTABLISH A PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH REPORTERS®

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ABSTRACT

James E. Lukaszewski talks frankly about how executives should relate to reporters when they want to do an interview. There are three schools of thought, but only the third truly serves the interviewee and the public interest:

1. Tell it all; tell it fast; let the media figure it out.
2. Try to be buddies; try to be friendly; try to be responsive; try to appear as though you like reporters.
3. Establish a professional relationship; recognize that dealing with reporters is a fact of life and that the goal is to achieve communications objectives by getting the messages out as well as by being responsive to reporters.

So, what should the nature of your relationship with reporters be? The answer is simple. It should be professional based on five basic caveats:

1. Set objectives (have a reason for dealing with reporters).
2. Do your homework on reporters.
3. Do your homework on their medium.
4. Understand the nature of the relationship (you are always a story).
5. Establish your own internal ground rules and stick to them.

In this monograph, Lukaszewski describes the perfect spokesperson, the one who is comfortable with this professional relationship with the news media and has a concrete sense of why interviews are done. He also provides an interviewee's wish list and a summary of reporter behaviors.

He describes what news is from two very different perspectives: what reporters look for when they develop stories and what executives look for in the stories in which they are quoted. Examining these expectations shows some unique and unusual differences. Perhaps the greatest difference of all – and the reason that interaction with reporters requires so much caution and preparation – is the relentless emotionalizing that reporters build into their questions in an effort to create news worthy of being aired in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Lukaszewski provides an antidote for the emotional vocabulary reporters often use in their interviews.

The final section of this monograph deals with the causes and sources of news story errors and fixing reporter mistakes. Lukaszewski reminds us that for most business people, the news interview offers the unparalleled opportunity, even if the news is bad, to get important messages out to selected audiences, but only if executives successfully participate in the interview process and recognize their true relationship with reporters. He emphasizes that working with reporters is a professional process, which the community expects business people to participate, and especially so when there is potential impact on health and safety, property values, peace of mind, or lifestyles.



If this Abstract has been helpful and you wish to acquire the entire text, please visit www.Amazon.com.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) advises, coaches, and counsels the men and women who run very large corporations and organizations. He is an expert in managing and counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications issues. The fastest growing portion of his practice involves civil and criminal litigation. He is one of the few who can and truly does coach CEOs.

He is a prolific author (several books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), coach, and counselor. He is quoted in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and industry trade journals. He is a columnist, advisor, or editor for almost every major public relations periodical. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies that Reduce the Media's Power*, remains a classic work in the field of direct communication. He is the author of the four-volume *Executive Action[®] Crisis Communication Management System* and has published 26 unabridged

monographs on critical communication subjects since 1994. His newest book, *Why Should the Boss Listen to You?*, was published by Jossey-Bass in 2008.

He is an internationally recognized speaker on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs, and reputation preservation and restoration. 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) and Board of Ethics & Professional Standards. He served as a crisis communications advisor to the International Disaster Advisory Committee, Agency for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance from 1989 to 1992, and is a civilian advisor to several other federal agencies. 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 both Ball State University's 2004 National Public Relations Achievement Award and the 2004 Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to PRSA, and is among the winners of the 2005 *PR News* Lifetime Achievement Award. His name appeared 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."