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**THE PEPPERMILL PUBLIC HEARING:  
A COMMUNICATION SKILL-BUILDING SIMULATION EXERCISE<sup>©</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Two questions face crisis planners. First, how can they best help a reluctant management be ready to respond verbally as well as administratively and operationally? Second, once an approach is suggested, how can management be assured that its participation will mitigate potential reputational damage?

One technique involves effective, dramatic, participant-involving simulations. There are several guidelines for developing excellent communication simulation experiences:

- Take a positive approach and deal only with the most serious scenarios.
- Avoid approaches that embarrass management and kill management participation and interest.
- Use a dramatic story or problem that is both plausible and directly relevant to an existing business issue.
- Set specific learning objectives.
- Provide specific instructions to participants for role-playing.
- Use a skilled facilitator.
- Establish positive goals for the exercise that demonstrate what participants do correctly.
- Be prepared to provide participants with single-sheet scenarios containing action checklists and outlines of their duties.
- Hold an interactive, verbal assessment session later the same day.
- Have only two or three specific, positive recommendations at that meeting.

One of the more interesting simulations The Lukaszewski Group uses, because it teaches so many of the communication lessons corporations are concerned about today, is the Peppermill Scenario. This simulation can be adapted to involve participants in public meetings; in solving internal communications issues, media relations problems and issues, and litigation and legal issues; in dealing with angry neighbors, competitors, and disgruntled employees; and in resolving the chaos that crisis situations often generate.

The lessons this scenario teaches can be applied broadly across an organization to a variety of potential threat circumstances. These lessons directly reflect the crucial appropriate behaviors that should form the basis for crisis response. Somewhere, somehow, victim, community, employee, and government questions will be answered, and quickly. When the organization is not ready, responses will come from outsiders – often in ways that cannot be controlled and not liked by management.

This monograph provides background on the Peppermill Company and the situation it is facing along with confidential instructions for each of the players in the simulation.



If this Abstract has been helpful and you wish to acquire the entire text, please visit [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

## **PRODUCT DETAILS**

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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*<sup>®</sup> *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](http://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."