

BECOMING A STRATEGIC COUNSELOR

Advising others on the issues, problems and situations that truly matter is one of our most challenging professional activities. It takes a special breed of individual to counsel those who do important work affecting the lives, lifestyles and well being of other people, organizations, cultures, even societies.

Because it's useful to examine the principles and behaviors that drive the advice these unique counselors and consultants provide, let me distill my observations of these special people into some serious guidance and key principles to help the staff who coach, counsel and befriend those having operating responsibilities.

THE COUNSELOR'S PRIME DIRECTIVE

The prime directive in all advice, counseling and staff work is to **serve others first** – for their benefit and from their perspective. The primary role of staff functions is advisory and consultative.

Supporting that directive is the commitment to **provide simple, sincere and sensible advice and counsel.**

- **Simple counsel** means doing only the important things, the most crucial things, first. It means striving for the successful forward increment rather than the global solution. Incremental progress is far more readily achievable than either the silver bullet or big idea.
- **Sincere** means providing advice and counsel you can talk about with others with a straight face, that you know works based on your experience and the experience of others, and that other powerful forces can endorse.
- **Sensible advice** means fundamentally sound advice. This is advice that at first glance, second glance and third glance is unchallengeable and unassailable. It makes sense, even though it may infuriate some or seem over-simplified to others.



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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 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."