

PATTERNS: THE STRATEGIST'S FOUNDATION FOR ACTION

Strategists recognize the constraints, the insights, and the power to leverage some understanding of the future that patterns provide.

In almost every imaginable situation, field of learning, area of discipline, ritual, crisis, news story, you name it, looking for and finding common features from previous experience, whether personal or vicarious, is, for the strategist, one of the first steps toward moving in new directions.

It is working against patterns that generate new solutions, approaches, closure, and resolution. The most challenging patterns of all, of course, are those created by the human experience.

PATTERN EXAMPLES

Both from management and communications perspectives, **patterns provide powerful indications, which if ignored or carelessly addressed, can cause even the most strategic intentions to fail, come apart, or simply appear not to work.** Even the most adverse of circumstances and the worst of surprises have recognizable elements and even reasonably similar event sequences. Here are some examples:

- ***Terrorism*** – These are powerful acts of communication and message sending meant to humiliate, embarrass, and terrorize non-combatants. They are designed to mobilize non-combatants against their government and other organizations that give society shelter, protection, and safety. The change in the pattern we saw on September 11th was a much more sophisticated approach, a monumentally devastating message, and the clear signal that this generation of terrorists expects to be consumed by the delivery of their message. The war against terrorism is a series of pattern responses based on real information and hypothesized circumstances based on information from the past that can be projected into the future.



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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."