



The  
Lukaszewski  
Group

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America's Crisis Guru®  
Crisis Management, Leadership  
and Organizational Recovery

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EXECUTIVE MEDIA  
TRAINING WORKSHOP

*INTERVIEW*  
*PREPARATION*  
*NOTES*®

*by*

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## ANSWERING ATTACKS IN NEW MEDIA

Before you respond:

1. Are employees talking about the situation or asking questions?
2. Are customers talking about or asking questions?
3. Is there additional buzz or conversations going on other social media platforms?
4. Are there any sudden, unexplained changes in operating or other performance results or expectations?
5. Can you respond constructively and positively?

The answers to these questions need to be substantially yes, otherwise let it go.\*

\* See Bad News Corrections, Exhibit Page # 8.

## ANSWERING TOUGH, TOUCHY, SENSITIVE QUESTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Presenters often say that the easy part of presentations is handling questions and answers during and at the end of their talks. This enthusiasm is tempered severely when they encounter situations that are extremely difficult and tension filled, usually when the questioner is emotional, irritating, or intentionally trying to embarrass the presenter or disrupt the proceedings. Handling emotional questions is often grueling and gut-wrenching.

Emotional questions and emotional responses are most likely when the issues being raised involve health and safety; property values; and quality of life issues such as peace of mind, freedom from fear, and pride in community or family. These issues are mostly emotion driven.

The questions themselves may be relatively straightforward. It is the emotionalization of the question, or bringing up sensitive topics, that leads to presenter discomfort and, perhaps, a feeling of inadequacy, even fear, in dealing with these situations.

### A SEVEN-STEP PROCESS

Remember, every question is important since communication occurs only when someone asks a question and there is an opportunity to answer. Use this seven-step process to respond effectively, humanely, and appropriately to emotionally charged situations. It's a process because the steps impose a purpose, order, and helpful structure for the presenter's answers and, like most process approaches to communication, tend to de-emotionalize the situation.

#### ***Step One: Manage the Emotional Dimension First***

React to the people, animal, and living system dimensions of the question first. If questioners are angry, acknowledge their anger; if questioners are fearful, acknowledge their fear; and if questioners are upset, acknowledge their discomfort.

Examples: "That's an important question." "We all can understand why you're so concerned." "Health issues are among the most important concerns for each of us." "I'm sorry you're so uncomfortable; let me see if I can provide some useful information." "I've heard this truly important question asked and answered a number of times; let me see if I can be of some help." "Let's talk it through."

#### ***Step Two: Give Control to Others***

Emphasize restrictions, controls, regulations, monitoring, oversight, and continuous disclosure ahead of other issues and concerns, or the typical corporate self-forgiving, self-congratulatory language.

Examples: “This may be among the largest facilities of its kind, but it will be one of the most heavily regulated, observed, and monitored.” “The controls, restrictions, and regulations imposed on our operations will be monitored by outside, independent organizations for compliance.” “Independent monitoring combined with public disclosure will provide everyone who’s interested with moment-to-moment information.” “As time passes, we fully expect tough new regulations and even more rigorous restrictions and controls to be imposed.”

Examples to Avoid: Anything that begins with, “We are proud of,” “The facts are,” “This is the only way,” “There are no alternatives,” “It’s only an isolated incident,” “There’s no reason to be fearful,” or “There will be no difference.”

**Step Three: *Find a Few Useful Positive Facts / Obligate Yourself***

One of the key lessons of managing emotional situations is recognizing that facts are of only limited value. The inclination of most business people and managers is to pile on the data, believing that objectively produced information, which would convince any rational person, will convince someone in an emotional state. The rule is that data is important but only effective when you can balance the emotional component. Yes, facts and data are important but far less so than dealing directly and empathetically with the emotional issues being faced.

Examples: “There are studies that acknowledge the issue you raise and provide helpful information, such as . . .” “Our experts have been telling us . . .” “We have really looked into this question deeply, and the information we have developed says . . .” “This is independent information that shows . . .” “We’re responsible for explaining everything we’ve proposed.” “You can count on us because it’s our obligation to . . .” “When you have questions or issues, we’re just a phone call or visit away.” “We will find an answer to your question.”

**Step Four: *State a Useful Positive Benefit, Gently***

Emphasize how important your information may be to the individual’s situation and, perhaps, other sources that might help the individual feel better and have more information.

Examples: “While this will be among the largest facilities of its type; it will also be one of the most heavily regulated and controlled facilities of its type.” “As a condition of obtaining permission, there will be permanent oversight by independent, outside individuals and organizations to ensure that promises made are promises kept.” “Questions like yours have triggered enormously helpful and serious research to find answers.” “This permit or public decision will be made only after the community is satisfied that it has imposed sufficient restrictions, regulations, oversight, and controls.”

With limited enthusiasm: “Some jobs will be created in . . .” “The economic benefit will be substantial.” “The local economy will benefit by . . .”

**Step Five: Tell the Truth / State or Acknowledge the Negatives:**

Address the health, environmental, and community issues forthrightly.

Examples: “From our perspective, we are doing everything we can to address the issues you are raising, and the proof will be when we . . .” “Yes, the trains will be longer; there will be more emissions in these areas, but there will also be fewer pollutants by thousands of tons.” “Overall mercury will decline 37 percent; however, the use of Western coal will raise the emission of mercury by about X pounds per year over present levels.”

**Step Six: Make Credible Comparisons**

Accommodate personal feelings; try to avoid analogies by instead comparing “appropriate” and “like” situations and facts. “What other information can we provide?”

Examples: “A plant of similar size, but gas powered, employs 34 people versus 120 people for coal-fueled units.” “Comparing coal-fueled plants to gas-fueled plants: The coal-fueled plants cost more to build, but the operating and expense elements are approximately the same. It’s the extraordinary spiking and relentless growth of gas prices that makes coal the better choice.”

**Step Seven: Consensus/Solution (Optional)**

If you are particularly successful in communicating with the individual or group on the emotional issue, you could move toward an acknowledged mutual understanding by suggesting positions or answers the emotional, adversarial questioner might see as mutually beneficial or that would move the process ahead.

Examples: “Have I responded to the issues that were making you uncomfortable?” “What was most important from your perspective?” “Has what I said been helpful?” “Was there anything that you found especially useful?” “If we modify X or Y in the manner you suggest, would that help you feel less concerned?” “What specifically would resolve your questions?”

**SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS**

1. **Focus Forward:** Always answer the question as though it was the first time you have heard it, even if you just answered the same question a few minutes before. Rather than directing people back to the content of your presentation or remarks, treat the question as if it were brand new and answer it from the stand point of now, and what’s next. This will help you avoid the use of negative language.
2. **Stay Positive:** The greatest emotional trigger in adversarial situations is the use of negative language or negative responses such as: “That’s not true,” “I never said that,” “That’s not what I meant,” “You weren’t listening,” “That’s not our fault,” “We didn’t mean it that way,” “That couldn’t happen,” and “We would never do that.”

Find the positive alternative in every case, or you stoke the fires of emotion and antagonism.

3. ***Put Yourself in Their Shoes Every Time:*** The ability to have this level of empathetic response is one of the most important aspects of moving through an emotional questioning situation.
4. ***Control Your Own Emotions:*** Avoid taking inflammatory language and emotionally charged words, such as “ashamed,” “embarrassed,” “humiliated,” “bad,” “ugly,” “weird,” “worried,” and “scum,” personally. They are just words. Instead, move to answer the question and counteract your emotional reaction by focusing on a positive declarative response.
5. ***Always Worry When They Throw Sticks and Stones:*** Words rarely hurt unless you let them.
6. ***Defuse the Situation:*** “Let’s talk it through.” “Let’s look at the situation step-by-step.” “Let’s examine your question systematically, one element at a time.”

**ASSUMPTION / REALITY ANALYSIS**

**Watch the Gap**

Test your assumptions and theories against victim, survivor, family, and community realities.

<b>What We Assume / Say</b>	<b>What Victims, Families/Survivors, Employees, Communities Really Care About</b>
1. Deaths of this nature are very rare.	1. So, my son’s death doesn’t matter?
2. We asked your son to be more vocal about what the procedure actually was supposed to be.	2. So it’s my son’s fault that you removed the wrong organ?
3. We donate millions of dollars of charity care and research each year.	3. It didn’t prevent my son’s death, did it? How many others had you killed this way?
4. It’s a very complicated procedure that was explained to you and your son, and we told you they were going to the risks.	4. I don’t recall you’re talking about your own negligence, and callous carelessness. You don’t care do you?
5. Our staff saves thousands of lives every year. We are one of those highly ranked hospitals in our market.	5. So, you should get to forgive yourself because so many are luckier than my son?
6. On the scale of problems and tragedies hospitals can experience, and while any death is one death too many, on the whole, we are very proud of our medical practice excellence.	6. He was my only son.
7. We are so very sorry for your loss, but your son’s situation just doesn’t merit the kind of settlement you looking for. Even if we gave you 10 times what you’re asking, it wouldn’t bring your son back and it would ruin the reputation of a top physician.	7. True, but it would hurt you badly enough that you’ll think long and hard before you make the same mistakes that took my son’s life, and murder someone else’s child. I’m not doing this for me; I’m doing this to protect others from you.
8. We don’t believe it was our fault.	8. It happened in your hospital, under your care, with your award-winning staff in charge, who else is there to blame?

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOOD ANSWERS**

1. About people
2. Benefits versus features
3. Bridges
4. Communications objectives:
  - Messages
  - Plain language statements.
5. Complexity into process (pieces, parts, elements, phases, steps, sections)
6. Contrast
7. Credibility
8. Empathy and sympathy
9. Few modifiers
10. "For examples"
11. Forward focus
12. Goals:
  - Achievable
  - Brief
  - Plain language
  - Positive
  - Single topic
  - Time sensitive
13. Human Factors.
14. Meaningful specificity.
15. Memorability:
  - Alphabetize
  - Chronology
  - Dramatic examples
  - Packaging and bundling
  - Power words
  - Repetition
  - Tell 'em
  - Verbal cueing
16. Negative words eradicated.
17. Non-disparaging.
18. Non-technical (13-year-old level) language.
19. Ownership
20. Pacing pauses.
21. Packaging and bundling.
22. Persuasiveness.
23. Power words, not color words.
24. Pyramid-like structure.
25. Story-like construction:
  - Beginning, middle, end
  - Brief
  - People oriented
  - Plain language
  - Positive
  - Self-evident, lesson, moral, message, or purpose
26. Themes
27. Voicing

## BAD NEWS CORRECTION CHECKLIST

If you determine that you have been wronged in a news story, you must decide what to do about it. Your decision should be based on the answers to the following questions:

1. Is it important enough to correct or would a correction amount to nit-picking?
2. Just how damaging is the charge, criticism, or error?
3. Will a correction simply give greater visibility to an opposite point of view?
4. Is a correction worth a restatement of the entire problem, including the error, to new audiences?
5. Is it possible to reach the identical audience originally exposed to the error?
6. Did you respond promptly and accurately to the media inquiries that led to the story?

## MAKING BAD NEWS WORSE IN LEGACY MEDIA

Four sure-fire ways to make bad news even worse are to:

1. Lose your temper.
2. Phone the offending medium and demand a meeting with management at which you threaten everything from withholding advertising to bodily harm.
3. Call the reporter and demand a retraction.
4. File a lawsuit.

## MAKING BAD NEWS WORSE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Answering at all.
2. Be negative and accusatory (use “you” a lot).
3. Explain the unexplainable.
4. Be offensive.
5. Be wordy and dull.

## BAD NEWS ERADICATOR

The Bad News Eradicator was designed to help eliminate defensive words and negative phrases from your speech and writing. Keep the document next your telephone. Take it with you when you travel. Collect your own set of habitual negative phrases and words. List them on the sheet, then create their positive equivalent and get a whole new life. The goal is to create a positive phrase that has the same or fewer words than the negative phrase.

The nature of this discipline, because that's what it is, is to constantly and relentlessly translate and transform the energy of negative language into the power of positive speech or writing. Whenever you have a moment, simply work through the list and develop equivalent positive phrases for each negative phrase. There are many ways to accomplish this; sometimes a negative phrase has a half dozen or more positive equivalent options. The goal is to eradicate the negativity and gain a whole new power over your life.

1. "Are not limited to . . . "	"Include, among others . . . "
2. "Are not associated with . . . "	"Are separate from . . . "
3. "Are not necessarily indicative."	
4. "Do not include . . . "	"Only include . . . "
5. "Does not require . . . "	
6. "Does not sufficiently substitute . . . "	
7. "Does not exceed . . . "	
8. "Does not occur . . . "	
9. "Don't hesitate to call."	"Please call."
10. "Doesn't hurt to ask."	
11. "Don't worry, he won't care."	
12. "Employees who no longer have an ownership . . . "	
13. "Entitled, but not obligated, to..."	
14. "Generally does not vary."	"Generally is consistent."
15. "Have not been registered . . . "	
16. "Have not yet made . . . "	
17. "He is not happy about this."	"He'd rather see . . . "
18. "He's not deranged . . . anymore."	
19. "I can't comment on the past . . . I wasn't there."	"What I can tell you is . . . "
20. "I can't comment on what hasn't happened."	
21. "I can't say for sure."	
22. "I can't speak for them."	
23. "I couldn't help it."	
24. "I don't believe you."	
25. "I don't disagree."	
26. "I don't know."	"Here's what I know . . . "
27. "I don't like that idea."	"Let's try this . . . "
28. "I don't mean to apologize."	
29. "I don't see the connection."	
30. "I wouldn't say that."	"What I would say is . . . "
31. "I wouldn't say you couldn't do that."	

32.	“It is disappointing and misleading.”	
33.	“If adequate funds are not available.”	“If we need additional funds . . . ”
34.	“If either of these events had not occurred . . . ”	
35.	“If you can’t refrain from . . . ”	
36.	“If you do not refrain from . . . ”	“Stop doing . . . ”
37.	“If you do not wish . . . ”	
38.	“Investors are strongly cautioned not to place any reliance...”	
39.	“Is not eligible . . . ”	“Here’s what’s eligible . . . ”
40.	“It can’t be done.”	
41.	“It didn’t happen that way.”	
42.	“It is unable to . . . ”	
43.	“It never happened.”	
44.	“It was unceremoniously rejected.”	
45.	“It wasn’t a good idea then, and it isn’t any better now.”	
46.	“It wasn’t our intent to not be involved.”	
47.	“It won’t be any trouble at all.”	
48.	“It won’t be that way.”	
49.	“It won’t work.”	
50.	“It’s not against company policy.”	
51.	“It’s never been done before.”	
52.	“It’s not inappropriate.”	
53.	“It’s not my responsibility.”	
54.	“It’s not the same.”	
55.	“It’s not unreasonable.”	
56.	“It’s not too expensive.”	
57.	“It’s not too much trouble.”	
58.	“It’s unlikely that he won’t disagree.”	
59.	“It’s not unlikely that people will come up with something we won’t do.”	
60.	“Let’s not be negative.”	
61.	“May not make changes.”	“Changes are limited to . . . ”
62.	“May not be covered.”	
63.	“Mis-recollection is not impossible.”	
64.	“Most likely to not achieve.”	
65.	“Must not be an ineligible corporation.”	
66.	“My answer is not no.”	
67.	“No.”	
68.	“No acquisitions are currently proposed.”	
69.	“No amendment may be made.”	
70.	“No, clearly we’re not doing it now.”	
71.	“No comment.”	
72.	“No conflict of interest.”	
73.	“No increase or decrease is planned.”	
74.	“No, it’s not wrong.”	
75.	“No problem.”	
76.	“No revenue was generated.”	
77.	“Not affiliated with . . . ”	“Affiliations are these . . . ”
78.	“Not my job, unfortunately.”	

79.	“Not permitted to be . . . ”	
80.	“Not that again.”	“Let’s move on.”
81.	“Nothing is impossible.”	“Everything is possible.”
82.	“Nothing was done.”	
83.	“Notwithstanding the general limitations . . . ”	
84.	“Options are not exercisable.”	
85.	“Our boss would never buy it.”	
86.	“Our customers wouldn't like it.”	
87.	“Our participation was never greater than theirs.”	
88.	“Our people would never do that.”	
89.	“Shouldn’t you have objected?”	
90.	“Some of which will not materialize.”	
91.	“That isn't our problem.”	
92.	“That wouldn’t work.”	
93.	“That's impossible.”	
94.	“That's not a bad approach.”	
95.	“That's not a good question.”	
96.	“That’s not been proven.”	
97.	“That's not our fault.”	
98.	“That’s not to say we can’t do it.”	
99.	“That’s not true.”	“Here’s what’s true . . . ”
100.	“That’s not our perspective.”	
101.	“That’s partly untrue.”	
102.	“That’s the wrong attitude.”	
103.	“That’s unhelpful and unnecessary.”	
104.	“The allegations are false, misleading, libelous, and absurd.”	
105.	“The company does not expect, nor can it guarantee . . . ”	
106.	“The company does not plan to . . . ”	“The company plans to . . . ”
107.	“The company has the right, but not the obligation.”	
108.	“The company makes no representation or warranty . . . ”	“The company warrants to . . . ”
109.	“The company shall not terminate . . . ”	
110.	“The company shall not take any of the following actions.	
111.	“The company will be under no duty to give notification.”	
112.	“The company would not be able to . . . ”	
113.	“The forecasts should not be regarded as a representation.”	
114.	“The increasing inability . . . ”	
115.	“The information is not exhaustive.”	
116.	“The option may not be exercised . . . ”	
117.	“The statements were not prepared with a view toward compliance.”	
118.	“There can be no assurance.”	
119.	“These committees do not set the final policy.”	

120.	“They will have no further rights.”	
121.	“This is not about contract negotiation; we’re not talking about that.”	
122.	“This was not a regular occurrence.”	“A more likely occurrence is . . . ”
123.	“Unable to attain.”	
124.	“Unable to complete.”	
125.	“Undue reliance should not be placed on . . . ”	
126.	“Unvested options may not vest...”	
127.	“We aren't a bad company.”	
128.	“We can't change that fast.”	
129.	“We can’t say that.”	
130.	“We can't talk about it.”	
131.	“We categorically deny that.”	
132.	“We couldn't have known.”	
133.	“We decided not to do it.”	
134.	“We did all right without it.”	
135.	“We didn’t circumvent the rules.”	
136.	“We didn’t engage in that practice.”	
137.	“We didn't know.”	
138.	“We didn’t need to do that.”	“What we should have done was . . . ”
139.	“We don't agree it’s unnecessary or unwarranted.”	
140.	“We don't care.”	
141.	“We don't have enough studies.”	
142.	“We don't have the resources.”	
143.	“We don't have the time.”	
144.	“We don’t see it that way.”	
145.	“We meant nothing of the kind.”	
146.	“We never did that.”	
147.	“We shouldn’t get involved.”	
148.	“We won't have the money.”	“Money will be limited.”
149.	“We're just too busy; we can't.”	
150.	“We’re not capable of that.”	
151.	“We're not ready for that.”	
152.	“Were not approved or disapproved.”	“It remains to be approved.”
153.	“Why won't you use everything I say?”	
154.	“Will not be allowed to . . . ”	
155.	“Will not be revoked.”	
156.	“Will not become exercisable.”	
157.	“You can’t believe that.”	
158.	“You can’t make a mistake.”	
159.	“You have nothing to fear.”	
160.	“You may not take such information out.”	“Information you can remove is limited to . . . ”

**BRIDGING LANGUAGE**

1. . . . But the facts are . . .
2. . . . From my perspective . . .
3. . . . Here's an even tougher question . . .
4. . . . Here's another way to say it . . .
5. . . . I have heard that, too, but the real focus should be . . .
6. . . . I would describe it differently . . .
7. . . . If I may, here's a more important point . . .
8. . . . Looking ahead . . .
9. . . . Let's deal in reality . . .
10. . . . Let's talk about something I'm even more familiar with . . .
11. . . . Let's use another perspective . . .
12. . . . Opinions can differ, but I believe . . .
13. . . . Our goal is . . .
14. . . . That's one view, mine is . . .
15. . . . The critical issue is . . .
16. . . . The question should be . . .
17. . . . What concerns me even more . . .
18. . . . What's more important is . . .
19. . . . Yes, but . . .

**CAUSES AND SOURCES FOR NEWS STORY ERRORS****We Cause Errors By:**

1. Being inaccessible.
2. Being too technical.
3. Misquoting our own facts.
4. Giving fuzzy answers.
5. Getting irritated with reporters.
6. Giving old information.
7. Going beyond our knowledge.
8. Going beyond the reporter's knowledge.
9. Leaking information.
10. Making irrelevant comments.
11. Saying too little.
12. Saying too much.
13. Speaking without key messages.
14. Speculation.
15. Spilling our guts.
16. Using "no comment."

**The Media Cause Errors By:**

1. Being first rather than right.
2. Creating inappropriate headlines.
3. Fabricating stories and data.
4. Finding internal leaks.
5. Leaping to conclusions.
6. Making up quotes.
7. Misquoting.
8. Moving too quickly.
9. Not rigorously seeking responses.
10. Speculating.
11. Using anonymous sources.
12. Using unauthorized sources.
13. Using old and erroneous information knowingly.
14. Using outside experts with questionable expertise.
15. Using references from competition or adversaries.
16. Using unverified information (usually rumors).

## COLOR WORDS: The Spokesperson's Greatest Vulnerabilities

Afraid	Delinquent	Harmful	Sad
Agitated	Demean	Hateful	Sarcastic
Aggravate	Deny	Hopeless	Scared
Alarmed	Despair	Hostile	Scum
Alleged	Desperation	Humiliated	Self-pity
Anger	Despicable	Hurt	Selfish
Angry	Destroy	Icky	Sellout
Anguish	Destructive	Idiot	Sham
Antagonize	Deteriorate	Ignorant	Shame
Anxious	Disappointed	Immature	Shameful
Apathetic	Disarray	Incompetent	Shatter
Appalled	Discontented	Inept	Sick
Apprehensive	Discouraged	Inappropriate	Silly
Argue	Discriminate	Irritated	Sissy
Arrogant	Disdain	Lies	Skunk
Ashamed	Disgusted	Litigate	Slander
Assassinate	Dismiss	Lousy	Slash
Attack	Disrespect	Mad	Sloppy
Awful	Distorted	Mangled	Stinky
Bad	Distraught	Mangy	Struggle
Betrayed	Disturbed	Manipulate	Stupid
Blame	Dopey	Mean	Surrender
Blasted	Doubtful	Meek	Tampering
Bombs	Dumb	Messy	Tarnish
Bored	Duplicity	Minimize	Tense
Botched	Ecotage	Miserable	Terrible
Brainwashed	Embarrassed	Monopoly	Terrified
Bungled	Embattled	Nag	Terror-stricken
Buried	Endanger	Negligent	Terrorized
Capitulate	Enraged	Out-of-touch	Threatened
Catastrophic	Evil	Overwhelmed	Toxic
Collusion	Eviscerate	Overzealous	Tragic
Conceal	Excessive	Outrageous	Traitor
Confused	Exaggerate	Painful	Tumultuous
Conspire	Exposed	Panicky	Ugly
Contempt	Face-saving	Petrified	Unbelievable
Corrosive	Fat	Pitiful	Uncomfortable
Cover-up	Fearful	Poisonous	Underhanded
Cringe	Fight	Profiteering	Undermine
Critical	Foolish	Questionable	Uneasy
Crooked	Frightened	Racist	Unhappy
Curious	Frustrating	Regret	Unimportant
Damaging	Furious	Repudiate	Unlucky
Danger	Goofy	Resentful	Unnecessary
Deadly	Gratuitous	Resigned	Unreal
Deceitful	Greedy	Rip-off	Unsure
Defeated	Guilty	Rotten	Weird
Defective	Harassed	Sabotage	Worried
Defensive			

## COMMON KILLER QUESTIONS

1. Aren't you embarrassed by this?
2. Couldn't it have been prevented?
3. Doesn't this situation make you uneasy?
4. Don't you care as much as they do?
5. Isn't that just a cheap shot?
6. Should you have done it? Would you do it again? Why?
7. They are furious. Aren't you at least angry or resentful?
8. What about the accusations? How do you respond?
9. What about the allegations? How true are they?
10. What do you do?
11. What does your company do?
12. What does your company give back to the communities in which it operates?
13. What is your company doing to advance the interests of minorities and women?
14. Who is to blame?
15. Whose fault is it?
16. Why are you being blamed?
17. Why doesn't that make you angry?
18. Who's really responsible for this mess?
19. Why didn't you plan for this contingency?
20. Will you pay the victim's expenses?
21. Are you going to apologize and take responsibility?

**COMMUNICATING INTENTIONALLY**

Sidebar to the Lukaszewski 40 Years in PR story

By James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, BEPS Emeritus*

Over the years, I've developed a very powerful and helpful communication philosophy. At the same time, this approach defines my ethical approach to life, to work and to trouble. I call these "intentions" because this how I seek to operate my life every day, and to teach others to do the same.

1. ***Candor – Truth with an attitude, delivered now (the foundation blocks of trust).***
  - Disclose, announce early.
  - Explain reasoning and reasons.
  - Discuss options, alternatives considered.
  - Provide unsolicited helpful information.
2. ***Openness, accessibility – Be available for the disasters as well as the ribbon cuttings.***
  - Be available.
  - Be willing to respond.
3. ***Truthfulness – Truth is 15% facts and data, 85% emotion and point-of-reference.***
  - Point of reference matters more than facts.
  - Factual overload victimizes people and makes them feel stupid, therefore angrier.
  - Unconditional honesty, from the start.
4. ***Apology – The atomic energy of empathy. Apologies stop just about everything, including litigation.***
  - Verbalize or write a statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow.
  - Acknowledge personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed, or wronged another.
  - Humbly ask for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.
5. ***Responsiveness – Answering questions relentlessly in every situation validates your integrity.***
  - Every concern or question, regardless of the source, is legitimate and must be addressed.
  - Answer every question; avoid judging the questioner.
  - Avoid taking any question personally.
  - Build followers and be nice, even in the face of anger or aggressive negativity. Anger and arrogance create plaintiffs.
6. ***Empathy – Action always speaks louder than words.***
  - Action illustrates concern, sensitivity, and compassion.
  - Act as though it was happening to you or someone you care about.

- It is literally impossible to put yourself in someone else's shoes in any meaningful way, from the victim's perspective.
7. ***Transparency – No secrets (because important things and stupid stuff always comes out.)***
- Our behavior, our attitude, our plans, even our strategic discussions are unchallengeable, positive, and explainable.
  - Our families would be comfortable reading about our actions, decisions, and discussions on the front page of tomorrow's newspaper.
8. ***Engagement – Face-to-face is the communications approach desired by just about everyone and every victim.***
- Those who challenge us most will require aggressive positive interaction.
  - Our base and those who give us permission to operate expect us to deal with unconvinced and victims.
  - Direct interactive response, even negotiation, empowers the initiator.
9. ***Destiny Management – It's your destiny, which only you can manage in your own best interest.***
- Manage your own destiny, or you'll find someone waiting on the sidelines to do it for you.
  - Relentlessly correct and clarify the record.
  - Prompt, positive, constructive elaboration of the facts preempts critics and empowers employees and supporters.

You can call this anything you like: communications policy, communication guidelines. I like the word intentions because it signifies that we are fully engaged in communicating in the most effective, honest, empathetic and open manner possible, all the time. This behavior can lead to an extraordinarily interesting and useful life.

## COMPASSION: USE WITH CAUTION

1. ***Control your language, control your own emotions:*** Avoid taking inflammatory language and emotionally charged words, such as “ashamed,” “embarrassed,” “humiliated,” “bad,” “ugly,” “weird,” “worried,” and “scum,” personally. They are just words. Instead, move to answer the question and counteract your emotional reaction by focusing on a positive declarative response. (See Color Words)
2. ***Compassion and empathy sometimes use Color Words*** to emphasize that we understand the damage we’ve done, or that others have suffered, such as:
  - Ashamed
  - Concerned
  - Disappointed
  - Embarrassed
  - Failed
  - Humiliated
  - Mortified
  - Regrettable
  - Shocked
  - Tragic
  - Unfortunate
  - Unhappy
  - Unintended
  - Unnecessary
  - Unsatisfied

**CAUTION:** Be very careful how and whether you express empathy. Empathetic sentiments can cause very negative reactions from victims.

## THE VOCABULARY OF COMPASSION

- Alarmed
- Appalled
- Ashamed
- Concerned
- Disappointed
- Embarrassed
- Empathize
- Failed / Failure
- Humiliated
- Let you down
- Mortified
- Regret / Regrettable
- Sad / Saddened
- Shocked / Surprised
- Sorrowful / Sorry
- Sympathy / Sympathetic
- Tragic
- Unfortunate
- Unhappy
- Unintended / Unintentional
- Unnecessary
- Unsatisfied

## CORE VALUES

1. Health and safety
2. Value of possessions and property
3. Environmental threats
4. Quality of life:
  - Peace of mind
  - Pride in community
  - Absence of conflict
  - Freedom from fear
5. Peer concern (pressure)
6. Economic security

## DESTRUCTIVE MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR

When we analyze what causes management communications programs to implode, explode, derail, self-destruct, or simply slide into the ditch, there are identifiable behaviors and activities that precede or predict disaster or negative collateral damage. Here's a checklist of the most destructive behaviors, attitudes, and approaches. If any of these are included in your communication or the behaviors of management, you're already in trouble. If you're even thinking about using them, recognize the damage they could cause and STOP NOW.

1. **Arrogance:** Opposite of empathy. Taking action without consulting those directly or indirectly affected means you don't care because you don't want to.
2. **Bland generalities:** The stone wall behind which the guilty hide.
3. **Cold logic:** An organization without empathy, a kind word for victims, or a tear is an organization without a heart. It is also an organization that will fail alone.
4. **Complexity:** The foggy, fuzzy hiding place of the guilty, complicit, or negligent.
5. **Emotionalism:** Usually a form of whining and victim confusion. The perpetrating organization focuses on itself instead of resolving real victim issues.
6. **Evil:** The combination of arrogance, deception, and remorseless, wicked, corrupt behavior.
7. **Hitting back:** Attacks on victims assure your destruction.
8. **Hot rhetoric:** Guarantees the perpetrator's own incineration – legally, rhetorically, publicly, and emotionally.
9. **Mindless verbiage:** Usually self-congratulatory or self-forgiving rhetoric. We all recognize it as an indicator of guilt, duplicity, or stupidity.
10. **Negative communication:** Non-communication, destructive, always causes confusion, is erroneous, and in some respect are lies.
11. **No comment:** Guarantees that seven out of 10 believe you are guilty of something.
12. **Oversimplification:** Underestimates the intelligence of victims and audiences.
13. **Partial truth:** A high-risk strategy that eventually backfires to burn reputations and careers.
14. **Silence:** If they won't answer the easy questions, what else are they hiding?

It would be nice to find out who in management education programs is teaching this stuff, or whether it's in the genes. When bad things happen, these behaviors tend to surface first. Attack them, expose them, rout them out, inhibit them, and stop them. The cost in reputation, credibility, and trust for repairing them is enormous.

If you'd like more information or equally interesting views, ideas, and concepts, contact my website at [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com).

## THE DICTIONARY OF NON-COMMUNICATION

The language of non-communication is negative and can be devastating. Identifying and correcting your own style shortcomings is essential to achieving leadership in verbal and written goals. The goal is to recognize, counteract, and eliminate non-communication.

Try your hand at creating your own positive equivalents to these negative statements.

"It doesn't matter that it won't happen."	
"It doesn't mean you're not finished."	
"It will not be inexpensive."	
"It's not necessarily bad."	
"It's not without limits."	
"It's virtually impossible to make a mistake."	
"Just because it wasn't said doesn't mean . . ."	
"Let's not kid ourselves."	
"My failure to act is not to be construed as acquiescence."	
"Neither side is incompatible."	
"No one denies it's true."	
"No problem."	
"No, it wouldn't be a bad idea."	
"Not for the uninitiated."	
"Not without a struggle."	
"Nothing can discount its value."	
"Nothing less than success."	
"Please don't hesitate to ask."	
"That is not unheard of."	
"That's not a bad idea."	
"The foregoing is without prejudice to our rights, none of which is waived."	
"The journey will not be without some obstacles."	
"The situation is by no means lost."	
"There is no reason why we cannot cooperate."	
"There is no right way."	
"There is nothing you cannot achieve."	
"We are not unmindful."	
"We can no longer fail to disclose what we did."	
"We can't do it without you."	
"What we did will not jeopardize the future."	
"You don't have to abandon your principles."	

## EMPLOYEE CORE VALUES

1. Personal job security
2. Company survivability
3. Safe and healthy tasks
4. Truth (principally from supervisors)
5. Quality of working life
  - Freedom from fear:
    - Pain/injury
    - Toxic substances
    - Wacko fellow employees
  - Peace of mind:
    - Fit into the work environment (quality/team/other management lingo)
    - Sufficient warning if job status will change
  - Peer/supervisor acceptance:
    - No politics
    - Fair/just management
6. Recognition (from supervisors)

**EXECUTIVE CONCERNS AND FEARS**

<b>Accuracy:</b>	Will the media tell our story correctly?
<b>Ambush:</b>	How do I protect myself?
<b>Antagonism:</b>	How do I answer tough questions?
<b>Babbling:</b>	How do I keep from just spilling my guts?
<b>Blocking:</b>	How will I stop the story if I don't like it?
<b>Comfort:</b>	How can I reduce my nervousness?
<b>Context:</b>	How will the reporter interpret my information?
<b>Control:</b>	Who runs the interview?
<b>Editing:</b>	Will I have a chance to fix the story?
<b>Errors:</b>	How will I fix mistakes the reporter makes?
<b>Fear:</b>	Can the reporter see me sweat?
<b>Hostility:</b>	How do I handle tough reporters?
<b>Image:</b>	Will the media present us properly?
<b>Off-the-record:</b>	Can I trust them?
<b>Personal Views:</b>	Can I make them?
<b>Prior Approval:</b>	Can I see the story before it appears?
<b>Psyched Up:</b>	How do I get ready?
<b>Response:</b>	How do I know when the interview has begun?
<b>Retractions:</b>	How do I get a retraction when a reporter makes a mistake?
<b>Rights:</b>	Do I have any?
<b>Rules of Engagement:</b>	What are they?
<b>Stupidity:</b>	How can I keep from looking like a jerk?
<b>Surprise:</b>	When will the reporters spring the trap?
<b>Taking the Fifth:</b>	How do we say no to interviews?
<b>Technology:</b>	Will the media understand our business?
<b>Trust:</b>	Can we rely on the reporter's assurances?

## FIRST RESPONSE STRATEGY

Successful crisis communication management planning and response is based on common sense priorities and fundamentally sound decision making and action. Ignoring these priorities is what can turn a relatively minor incident into a major, long-term, uncontrollable, reputation-defining series of events.

### Response Priorities

#### 1. *Stop the Production of Victims*

Resolve the problem promptly; begin addressing key issues. If it is leaking, foaming, smoking, burning, or creating victims, deal with the underlying problem first.

#### 2. *Manage the Victim Dimension*

It is victims and others who are directly affected that cause incidents to become crises. Be prepared to understand the dynamics of victims and anticipate those dynamics as the response process proceeds.

#### 3. *Employee Communications*

Every employee is a communicator when something happens. Whether there are 10 employees or 10,000 employees, when questionable activity or crisis occurs, everyone affected becomes a communicator. Use a 75-100 word format to inform, educate, and script employees promptly and frequently.

#### 4. *Contact Those Indirectly Affected*

(neighbors, regulators, governments, friends, allies, families, relatives)

Every crisis causes damage, injury, or fear in a large number of individuals who are indirectly affected: your organization infringes on another organization, or your problems taint your relationship with an ally, allied organization, or interest group. Inform them.

#### 5. *Deal With the Self-Appointed, Self-Anointed, and the Media*

Almost every crisis brings out individuals and organizations with their own agendas. Your crisis presents the opportunity to activate these agendas. Then there is the news media that can bring substantial attention to your crisis and you.

The key concept to remember here is that each of these five steps must be activated in the first one or two hours of any crisis. Missed steps will cause additional victims, questions, and misunderstandings, which your organization will have to deal with as the crisis is resolved.

## HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS

### A Communications Analysis

<b>12.5%</b> <b>D<sup>3</sup>UV<sup>2</sup> – Temporary</b>	<b>50%</b> <b>Don't Care (DC)</b>
<b>12.5%</b> <b>D<sup>3</sup>UV<sup>2</sup> – Permanent</b>	
<b>4%</b> <b>SAINNTS</b>	
<b>7%</b> <b>Dysfunctional Movers &amp; Shakers (DM&amp;S)</b>	
<b>15%</b> <b>Movers &amp; Shakers (M&amp;S)</b>	<b>20%</b> <b>Disengaged Don't Care (DDC)</b>

- 50%**    **DC:** Don't Care
- 20%**    **DDC:** Disengaged Don't Care
- 15%**    **M&S:** Movers & Shakers
- 7%**     **DM&S:** Dysfunctional Movers & Shakers
- 4%**     **SAINNTS:** Self-appointed IN or Near The Source
- 25%**    **D<sup>3</sup>UV<sup>2</sup> – Temporary/Permanent:** Disheartened,  
Disgruntled, Disoriented, Unconvinced Victims needing a
- 121%**   **Victory (over you)**

**NOTES:**

- **DC:** Average citizens who live in a democracy but intentionally ignore participating in it, though they benefit from it every day.
- **DDC:** Disengagement caused by forces beyond the citizen's control—job loss, sick parents, economic dislocation of some kind, or life dislocations.
- **M&S:** Movers & Shakers—the elected, the appointed, and the volunteers, ranging from Boy Scout and Girl Scout leaders to the president of the United States—focused on solving today's problems and moving toward tomorrow.
- **DM&S:** Also elected, appointed, and volunteers, but focused on preserving today and yesterday, and preventing tomorrow from happening.
- **SAINNTS:** People who watch and count what leaders are doing, and spontaneously and voluntarily report their observations to others. (They are self-appointed, they make things up.)
- **D<sup>3</sup>UV<sup>2</sup>:** Their main tools are aggressive, negative, irritating, embarrassing, or humiliating questions—why now, why me, why us, what alternatives did you consider, why are you doing this to me, what did I ever do to you, what were you thinking, why didn't you know, should the same people who screwed this up be in charge of fixing it, etc.?

## Exhibit # 20

**HOW REPORTERS BEHAVE**

1. Accuse interviewee of "anti-consumer" action (bias, exorbitant profits, neglect of handicapped and aged, hiding the truth, destruction of competition, bribery, etc.).
2. Ask about some specific company failure(s).
3. Ask interviewee for a personal opinion on a controversial company policy.
4. Ask interviewee for an opinion of competitor products or services.
5. Ask interviewee to respond to controversial or critical statements by others in or out of interviewee's organization.
6. Claim not to understand a technical or "company" answer.
7. Confirm an answer, then misinterpret or misquote.
8. Demand an answer to questions the interviewee can't answer.
9. Go on to another subject before the interviewee can make a complete or positive reply to the first question.
10. Interrupt.
11. On one subject, use several increasingly probing follow-up questions.
12. Pose a tough, complex question for quick response.
13. Put words in interviewee's mouth.
14. Shoot rapid-fire, hostile-sounding questions – pressing interviewee's pace of answering.
15. Solicit candid comments "off-the-record."
16. State a non-truth or distortion as fact or inside information to get a reaction.

## HOW REPORTERS PROBE FOR INFORMATION

- They ask for clarification:
- "Exactly what do you mean?"
  - "Say it again, please."
  - "What else?"
  - "What do you mean by that word?"
- They ask for justification:
- "When you say that, what are you assuming?"
  - "What's your reasoning on that?"
  - "Is that all there is to it?"
  - "What would someone on the other side say?"
- They may refocus the question:
- "If that's so, what about . . .?"
  - "How would you relate that to this . . . ?"
  - "How does (someone's) statement relate to . . .?"
  - "Let's take a closer look at that."
- They may prompt you:
- "If you say that, then you mean this, right?"
  - "Here's one answer to that . . ."
- In a panel, they may redirect the question:
- "Mr. X, do you agree?"
  - "Ms. X, how would you answer that statement?"

Some interviewers may probe until you say what they appear to want you to say.

## HOW TO ASSESS A BLOG OR SOCIAL MEDIA POST ABOUT YOU

Before you respond:

1. Are employees talking about the situation or asking questions?
2. Are customers talking about or asking questions?
3. Is there additional buzz or conversations going on other social media platforms?
4. Are there any sudden, unexplained changes in operating or other performance results or expectations?
5. Can you respond constructively and positively?

The answers to these questions need to be substantially yes, otherwise let it go.\*

\* See Bad News Corrections, Exhibit Page # 8.

## HOW TO ASSESS A NEWS STORY ABOUT YOU

1. Are the facts straight? Have they been checked and double-checked?
2. Is the story complete? Are the facts thorough and presented in context?
3. Are the facts in balance? Has everyone who could be affected by the story had a chance to comment?
4. Do readers/viewers/listeners have a legitimate right, need, or desire to know the information in the story? Are there public funds involved? Would public health or safety be affected? Is personal freedom at issue?
5. Is the story told in sufficient depth to relate it in understandable terms to the average reader's level of interest? Does the story have meaning for the reader/viewer/listener?
6. Has the medium handling the story given it the length and display or air time in keeping with its importance? Was the story presented with dignity and professionalism?

## HOW TO BE PERSUASIVE

1. Admit mistakes/shortcomings (and how you repaired or will repair them).
2. Always use positive language.
3. Ask for help in solving the problem.
4. Ask others to commit to your ideas.
5. Choose the option you recommend.
6. Grant the opposing point of view on at least two aspects.
7. Interpret the issue or situation from your perspective.
8. Offer at least three alternatives or options.
9. Show the value (benefit) of your recommendation.
10. State the issue from your perspective.

## INTERVIEW DEBRIEFING CHECKLIST

Interviews provide extraordinary opportunities to learn about ourselves and how we communicate about our organization's products, concerns, problems, and ideas. The following checklist will help us evaluate our performance in an interview. In addition, it will:

1. Help others know what took place.
2. Help us determine what information we didn't know before the interview.
3. Help us and others in our organization be better prepared for subsequent interviews on the same issue.
4. Help us build information files about our organization and issues for future reference and future use.

### Interview Debriefing Checklist:

1. Did we accomplish our objective? How?
2. What else did we accomplish?
3. Who was affected? Who will be affected?
4. Should we call them right away?
5. What new questions do our answers raise?
6. Who will have to answer them?
7. What did we learn from this interview:
  - About ourselves?
  - About the government?
  - About other products?
  - About other products and divisions of our company?
  - About our competition?
  - About our environment?
  - About new issues?
  - About the media's view of our business, product, or problem?
8. What follow-up activity is needed:
  - With reporters?
  - With other company divisions?
  - Within our own division?
  - With corporate public relations?
  - With government?
9. What questions were asked that we didn't expect? How did we answer them?
10. What should our answers have been?
11. Who should be briefed on this interview?

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION CHECKLIST

1. Set communications objective(s) for the interview.
2. Obtain and develop background information on the reporter(s).
3. Gather information on the news medium involved.
4. Gather ideas that could lead to questions.
5. Create lists of questions – the ones you hate to answer as well as those you hope will be asked.
6. Develop answers (in 125 words or less).
7. Select interesting visual opportunities.
8. Set ground rules.
9. Exercise your rights as an interviewee.

## KEEPING EVEN WITH THE NEWS

They finally noticed. An article titled “Take That, Mr. Newsman!” ran in *The New York Times* on January 2, 2006. It was about answering back to the news media, and especially through the Internet.

There is a powerful trend in public relations practice to more aggressively monitor, correct, clarify, discuss, anticipate, and preempt news stories using the power, agility, and penetration of the Web, and the First Amendment.

These developments are forcing reporters to change their methods. Reporters have to be more transparent and accountable in the news gathering process. Here are some of the “keeping even” techniques:

1. Conduct more interviews by e-mail.
2. Correction and clarification. (See Tab 4, *Corrections and Clarifications: A Short Course*.)
3. Gather e-mail exchanges and take notes on phone conversations. Publish them on your Web site.
4. Ask the reporter to make his notes public on a website.
5. Record, transcribe, and merchandise interview transcripts.
6. Release transcripts and notes preemptively for very serious stories.
7. Require e-mail confirmation of questions reporters wish to ask.
8. Publish comparisons between what the reporter originally asked for, and then actually published, broadcast, or discussed.
9. Conduct truth and clarity analyses of news stories as part of the correction and clarification process. (See article in Tab 4, *Getting Even with the News, It's Constitutional*.)
10. Correct everything, blogs, bloviators, commentators, agitators . . . everyone.

## THE LEXICON OF CONTROL

### Helping Communities Control Their Own Destiny, Providing Higher Likelihood That You Will Gain Permission, in Some Form, for What You Propose to Accomplish

The *Lexicon of Control* is a set of powerful communication and behavior intentions that very publicly commit an organization to broadly known public expectations that everyone can monitor and that are self-disclosed. The approach helps calm public concerns, answer the public's questions, reduce the power of critics and opponents, and put in place a variety of watchdog functions, all designed to keep organizations within the parameters the community expects and, through prompt disclosure, to reduce surprise and collateral damage when permits, rules, or regulations are violated or ignored.

This approach can also reduce the need for establishing local political support and advocacy groups. If the advocacy group approach is taken, such groups can gain additional credibility using the *Lexicon of Control* while you are controlling their script, power, influence, and personal agendas. Remember, when such groups are established, these groups may have other expectations about the power you confer on them and their individual members.

Public Officials will be more comfortable because you have taken responsibility for all the tough stuff. Critics will have a harder time gaining traction. Those most directly affected locally will have a better sense of control, because they will have better control; and you'll have to be more a supplicant than an economic miracle worker, which few if any believe will be true anyway.

### Optimism Management

Too often, companies and organizations with agendas and project proposals come into a community with such optimism and confidence in the worthiness of what they have in mind, that they are surprised by the immediate, often vicious resistance they experience. On the surface, the new idea, professionally presented, seems helpful, useful, and perhaps even crucial. Private meetings with public officials and community leaders are deceptively optimistic. Count on resistance, reluctance and, sometimes, confrontational or contentious public reaction. Rather than building confidence, the proposer's enthusiastic presentation, which often reveals prior briefing or apparent collusion of public officials, raises flags of concern, fears, doubts, and even resentment. This is because these presentations, which may please the bosses in charge or a sponsoring organization, tend to frighten the audiences by the appearance that everything is set to go, already decided . . . meaning the community sees itself more as a victim than a beneficiary of what is being "proposed."

### Communicate Publicly From the Beginning

An effective and realistic three-part strategy for managing expectations, as well as reducing contention and concern, is to first adequately and continuously emphasize outside controls over the program early; restrict and monitor the proposing organization's ideas, concepts, or operations even as ideas are initially evaluated and explored by the community. This approach is even more critical than over-touting supposed benefits to the host community. Benefits talk should never exceed 15 percent of any presentation, explanation, or proposal. Second, answer all questions about concerns, fears, and rumors, especially those that come from critics as well as from the news media. The beneficial talk of project proposers often generates more questions than there are answers. Be ready with as many answers for as many questions as possible, from the start.

Third, begin publicly briefing the whole community as promptly as possible, coincidentally with public officials and community leaders. Publics are increasingly sensitive about, and will punish, public officials who appear to collude with powerful interests before the community is aware of what is going on.

## Prepare for Resistance

Community resistance to most outside proposals today is virtually automatic. Therefore, being the first to emphasize restrictions and acknowledge negatives becomes essential to building community trust and slowing the opposition down while reducing the explosiveness of any issues.

Nationally, many industries are now encouraging the development and placement of government and independent overseers, as well as the imposition of controls or laws that allow the public to feel more in control and comfortable. Examples include the toy industry seeking safety legislation in 2008; the fresh food industry suggesting increased regulation; Food and Drug regulations that can speed up approvals; and rigorous and often voluntary ethics and oversight programs U.S. military contractors are imposing on themselves, just to name a few.

## Build Trust

In changing times trust is especially fragile. When a trust relationship with others is damaged or becomes suspect, and you must find ways to reestablish or rehabilitate the relationship, I often recommend using a *Lexicon of Control* and taking actions to make the lexicon dominate discussions. The concept is about acknowledgement and, sometimes, empowering others to look over your shoulder, control your actions, or be responsible for monitoring what it is you will be doing. This new behavior and language is powerful, obvious in its intent, and reassuring and clarifying to those who are concerned. about you, your company, products, or circumstances. Here are the key ingredients of the *Lexicon of Control*:

1. **Certification:** A formal procedure and process analysis established, conducted, and constantly monitored by publicly trustworthy independent parties. Examples exist in many industries—forestry, petroleum, clothing and toy manufacturing, especially in locations outside the United States where regulatory frameworks have yet to be effectively developed. Certification is usually dominated by critics and those often associated with the opposition. This is one of the reasons this approach has such extraordinary credibility, once established. It is expensive, onerous, and grindy, and the source of some friction and ongoing irritation. But the off-setting benefit is an environment of trust, speedy identification and correction of errors, problems, mistakes; and a muting and silencing of most other outside criticism and opposition.
2. **Controls:** Procedures and requirements, put in place and publically scrutinized, that force proposers and implementers to tow the mark in measureable or observable constrained ways.
3. **Independent Monitoring:** Increasingly frequent use of outside groups or organizations, sometimes law firms, to independently oversee what is going on and report the results of their observations.
4. **Laws:** Often a very powerful tool for putting in place, with penalties, control, oversight, and regulatory structures.
5. **Licenses:** Government notice of and formal restrictions of operations upon an organization and its processes that generally triggers many of the oversight and monitoring activities.
6. **Monitoring:** Both in terms of “looking over your shoulder” and, increasingly, developing dashboards on websites so people can, 24/7, constantly read out the data, processes, and outcomes being monitored.
7. **Oversight:** Using some independent individual or organization, which has ongoing and sometimes day-to-day responsibility, to look over your shoulder and report back to a wide variety of audiences and constituents on what is being observed. Reports and funded independently.
8. **Permits:** Generally, specific activity and authority limits—building permits, excavation permits, emission permits, vibration, air and discharge permits; instruments that limit more than they allow.
9. **Regulatory Structure:** Helping a public authority develop a framework of regulation and authorization, and oversight, where few, weak, or no structures currently exist.

10. **Regulations:** Procedures and processes imposed after permission to operate is given. There may be, as in the utility industry, full-time, permanent regulators who will require and review observance, compliance, and execution of rules and regulations.
11. **Requirements:** Demands made by independent authorities or organizations that must be met as a condition of operation.
12. **Restrictions:** These are definitive limits applied on operations, opportunities, and perhaps even products and services manufactured or delivered over and above what happens in permits, licenses, and regulatory activities.
13. **Rules:** Hard and fast guidelines, or bright lines, that help the public or those being protected readily understand the limits of your power, authority, and span and reach. Violations can be reported and may incur penalties.
14. **Variations:** Related mostly to zoning or existing rules and structures. At first glance, variations may seem like weak control mechanisms or perhaps clever exceptions to existing zoning. Because they raise red flags, they are extraordinarily difficult to accomplish, often require public meetings and hearings, and can prove contentious. Variations usually add more layers of regulation, control, restrictions, and requirements than they eliminate, modify, or alter. Always stress the additional controls and restrictions that variations tend to require.

If you'd like more information or equally interesting views, ideas, and concepts, contact the author's website at [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com).

## LUKASZEWSKI'S 12 AXIOMS OF CRISIS SURVIVAL 2014 Edition

Managing emergencies, crises, and disasters successfully means recognizing patterns of success and avoiding patterns of failure, and defeat. Understanding these patterns enables us to coach and prepare management's actions, emotions, and expectations before and during emergency situations. Here's what I've learned:

1. Neither the media, your toughest opponents, smartest critics, nor the government knows enough to defeat you. Defeat is almost always the work of uninformed or over confident, overly optimistic bosses, co-workers and associates; well-meaning but uninformed friends, relatives, or from dysfunction in an organization.
2. All crises are local, at the beginning. Keeping the issues and focus tight and small will help you solve your problems and move forward. Your "industry," outsiders, or the media cannot solve your problems (they don't care), nor can you solve theirs. You must solve your own. It's your destiny. Manage it or someone else will.
3. Disasters and problems rarely kill products, brands or companies unless you let them. It is your silence, negative communication and attitude that cause tough questions, bad stories, and real damage. Silence is the most toxic strategy of all.
4. Colorful and memorable language creates headlines that last forever, are impossible to live down and is among the most frequent causes for top executive dismissal during a crisis. Bad news always ripens badly.
5. Twenty-five percent of your resources and fifty percent of your energy during emergencies go toward fixing yesterday's mistakes. Crises are messy, sloppy, imprecise situations. Everything gets worse before most anything gets better.
6. Positive, aggressive, assertive communication limits follow-up questions, focuses on the most important aspects of the problem, and moves the entire process forward to resolution despite a negative environment, an antagonistic news media or contentious social media, angry victims and survivors. Positive, constructive, compassionate actions always speak louder than words.
7. There is no question you can be asked about your situation that will surprise you. You may get irritated, agitated or humiliated because a really tough or touchy subject is raised, but you aren't surprised. Promptly answering every question is your ongoing opportunity to get your messages out, and calm things down.
8. Preparation, rehearsal, and a certain amount of luck will keep you going and help you win.

9. Luck is limited.
10. The general public does not care about your problems until you make them care.
  - Fifty percent have no reason to care;
  - Twenty-five percent probably have troubles worse than yours, from their perspective, anyway; and
  - If you get the attention of those remaining, they will probably be glad you have the trouble you have.
11. Leadership that shows compassion, community sensitivity and ethical response strategies moves companies to victory and out of harm's way. Timidity, hesitation, confusion and arrogance bring defeat and long term trust damage. Keep the positive pressure on to win.

**Destructive management communication behavior and language often leads to similar troubling behavior at many levels within an organization.**

**Leadership has three principal responsibilities in crisis:**

- 1. Stopping the production of victims,**
- 2. Managing the victim dimension, and**
- 3. Setting the moral tone for the response.**

## MANAGING THE VICTIM DIMENSION

This outline has been constructed for those wishing to walk management through the concept of managing the victim dimension of a crisis or serious situation. For additional background on this topic: 1) visit [www.sorryworks.net](http://www.sorryworks.net), a website that describes the efforts that improve patient relationships and reduce litigation in health care; 2) search the web for “extreme honesty,” which will lead you to a 10-year study at the Veteran’s Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky that explored the power of apology and dealing with emerging situations quickly and empathetically; 3) also search for “Managing the Victim Dimension of Large-Scale Disasters” where the author discusses, in detail, this entire victim management strategy.

### Victims Are:

- People
- Animals
- Living systems

### Victimization Is:

- Self-designating
- Self-maintaining
- Self-terminating

### Causes of Victimization:

- |                |                  |                 |            |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|
| • Abuse        | • Commission     | • Disparagement | • Omission |
| • Accuse       | • Confrontation  | • Embarrassment | • Ridicule |
| • Arrogance    | • Contention     | • Exclusion     | • Sarcasm  |
| • Assault      | • Deception      | • Humiliation   | • Shame    |
| • Baiting      | • Demeaning      | • Intimidation  | • Surprise |
| • Belittling   | • Denigration    | • Fear          |            |
| • Blaming      | • Discrediting   | • Lies          |            |
| • Bullying     | • Disdaining     | • Minimizing    |            |
| • Callousness  | • Dismissiveness | • Negligence    |            |
| • Carelessness |                  |                 |            |

### Victims Feel:

- Anger
  - Betrayal, disbelief, dread, anxiety
- Frustration
  - Powerlessness, helplessness, fearfulness, humiliation, impotence, irritability, loneliness
- Inadequacy
  - Walking but wounded, agonized, confused, weak judgment and resolve
- Betrayal
  - Trust no one, no one to trust, irritable, anxious, agitated

**Victim Reaction:***Your Action*

- Friendly gestures
- Personal interest
- Well-meant advice

*Their Response*

- Interpreted as threats
- Perceived as intrusions and betrayal
- Perceived as insulting or controlling

**Victims Suffer:**

- Intellectual deafness
- 24/7 internal and external monologue
- Everything is a question

**Victims Need:**

- Validation
  - Preferably by the perpetrator
- Visibility
  - To describe their pain and warn others
- Vindication
  - Taking credit for resolution that prevents the victimization of others about the perpetrator
- Apology
  - Verbal or written admission of responsibility, the promise of amends

**Victim Management Imperatives:**

1. Control your own sense of outrage and betrayal.
2. Keep the real victim's circumstances in perspective.
3. Recognize the utter loneliness of victims, much of which they end up having to resolve themselves, by themselves, in their own time.
4. Be empathetic, keep at it, be helpful.
5. Anticipate and act ahead of patterns.
6. Recognize the deafness problem, repeat key information frequently.
7. Help move toward closure.
8. Be empathetic . . . do helpful stuff rather than saying helpful stuff (they are deaf).

If you'd like more information or equally interesting views, ideas, and concepts, contact the author's website at [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com).

## MEDIA ATTITUDES ABOUT EXECUTIVES

Reporters say that business people:

1. Are arrogant and self-serving.
2. Are hostile to reporters and their questions.
3. Don't agree that, though possibly unfair, the media has complete power to set the agenda and define what news is.
4. Don't care about people very much.
5. Don't know that reporters don't write headlines or have complete control of the length or content of their stories.
6. Don't know what news is.
7. Don't permit free access.
8. Don't trust the media.
9. Don't understand that newsroom culture has little use for reporters whose copy flatters the people about whom they write.
10. Don't want to accept the fact that embarrassment and conflict are almost always newsworthy.
11. Expect reporters to really know how businesses operate.
12. Refuse to understand that if the reporter thinks there is trouble – there is trouble.

## THE POLITICS OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS

### Building Community Consent

For an organization to succeed, each day, at least 51 percent of those who matter have to be pulling in the same direction. That requires leadership from the top, every day, to show the way and to help forecast and overcome the new barriers that arise and the old barriers that persist. This is a tall order in many organizations.

Some leaders are good communicators, some are non-communicators. Some leaders are good delegators, some are autocrats. Some leaders are bureaucrats, some are activists, and some are charismatic. The reality is that organizations will be successful in the context of their current leaders and leadership.

The lesson for every leader is that success is more likely when simple, sensible, constructive efforts are undertaken to build and maintain a base within the most important audience most leaders have, their employees and others whose lives are directly affected by their organizational relationship.

The question is, of course, how can management accomplish its goals while allowing undisciplined, often chaotic communication strategies? Answer: With great difficulty, if at all.

A business organization is very similar to a political body, so we begin with a political strategy—to win in any environment, those seeking to advance, lead, or achieve must have a base of winning-minded collaborators and followers to get the job done and establish the momentum to tackle the next challenge. The political exercise is one of simplification rather than complexity. Effective communication is an exercise in process-driven execution.

We begin the process of base building using the Ridgeway Audience Issue Analysis<sup>1</sup> model. Communication success is dependent almost solely on the base audience's level of interest in participating, or not, in a given situation. Figure One is the fundamental tool for carrying out this analysis. Here is the key: an issue generally has two types of audiences—the Base Audience and Special Publics. The Base Audience consists of those who have an ongoing, voluntary or involuntary interest or connection to the issue or circumstance. Usually the connection is a paycheck, some overwhelming benefit, or a threat that needs to be constrained.

The second audience component is the Special Publics grouping. Special Publics are individuals, organizations, or entities that have a relationship with the sponsoring organization based on the individual agendas of each Special Public, sometimes in opposition to the agenda, issues, or questions of the Base Audience. In this template, the small circles on the left represent a wide variety of organizational types and groups that are connected to the issue or organization by their private agendas.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ridgeway Strategic Audience Analysis Worksheet/Model is named for Paul Ridgeway, Chairman of Ridgeway International, a global special events firm based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The diagram was originally sketched on the back of a napkin in a fast food restaurant, in the middle of the night, in Canton, North Carolina. We were preparing to work with a huge paper mill as it encountered a serious community relations and political problem.

In the Base Audience section, you see, by the construction of the model, that the ideas and concepts to drive the issue or the organization forward begin in the center with Leaders. Communication moves out systematically to Top Management, then to Upper Management, then to Middle Management, then to First-line Supervisors, then to Employees, then to Employee Families, and then to the Community as a whole. There may be some other some groups (such as retirees, crucial customers or clients, sympathetic public policy makers, or any discrete group with collateral interests who make up the remainder of the Base Audience).

Perfecting the ability to systematically communicate with these groups and maintain a relationship is where most corporate and organizational initiatives fail. The process requires discipline, constant analysis, feedback, and action taken immediately or preemptively, as required. Base Audience success is almost always dependent on the First-Line Supervisor. Special Publics pay attention, on their own, talk to Top Management directly, but also (and often) throughout the Base Audience as well.

Note the arrows moving out from the Leader. This is a reminder that, to really benefit from this process, leadership must enforce the process of cascading communication from the top of the organization all the way out until the public or target audiences are reached, if that is the goal. The crucial insight of this model is that failure to energize the base and capitalize on what often are hundreds and, potentially, thousands of communicators is the chief cause of defeat, delay, or base confusion.

Also note the arrows going into the Base Audience circles, from the outer most ring to the inner most ring. Failure to systematically cascade information outward destroys the opportunity to have a continuous flow of incoming information, intelligence, and responses from the communities of interest that each of these Base Audience segments connects to.

Most successful initiatives require effective intelligence, input, and issue surveillance. The success of this entire approach rests on top management and, in particular, the leader of the organization, and the nature of the relationship desired with the front line supervisor.

There are five predictable, usually ongoing mistakes that cause internal communication efforts to fail:

1. **Too much attention is paid to Special Publics.** Chances are that we like these Special Publics. They are more like management in terms of leadership and, perhaps, even social station. Some may be famous, rich, or powerful. It is just more fun to deal with the publics that seem to be ready to deal with us.

Why is this a failure strategy? Because every one of these Special Publics has its own agenda that predominates and dominates its reason for being connected to you and your issue. Special Publics may abandon you, or bug you if their interests are being underserved or ignored.

2. **Failure to plug in your base.** When the Special Publics have questions about motivation, strategy, decision making, and even results, they move around Leaders and Top Management, and talk to friends, relatives, acquaintances, and informants located throughout your Base Audience. If the Base Audience's response is, "Management never tells us anything," you can bet that you have given the Special Publics more power than you intended.
3. **Avoid answering questions the base is asking.** When members of the community—including public policy makers, potential beneficiaries, or victims—inquire or are concerned about your strategies, they too will check with your base rather than with senior management. Once again, if the Base Audience is out of touch, disconnected, or disgruntled, the community

will get mixed signals at best, if not outright internally sponsored opposition to the key ideas you are proposing and communicating about.

4. **Allow Upper and Middle Management to block or control communication.** This is silo country. The job of these managers is to sanitize, prioritize, homogenize, and detoxify any information getting to Top Management or Leaders. This group I refer to as the “ladies in waiting” (maybe the boss will stumble today and one of us will get the job, at least for a period of time). In all my years of working in this arena, breaking down these barriers, punching holes in the silos has been an almost insurmountable task. The one strategy that does work is to leapfrog over these individuals and have the boss go directly to First-line Supervisors, Employees, and even the Community. Force them to pay attention to what is going on in the organization rather than just looking up, blocking key information, and watching what the boss is doing, thinking, or deciding, all the while protecting their own turf.

Get ready for the complaints, whining, and pushback of Upper Management. Here is what you are going to hear, “If you insist on going around us, you diminish and, in fact, destroy our authority.” “How can we be expected to run the business if the boss can do and runs all the time, whenever he or she feels like it?” “I worked a long time to get here, now I want to have the control I thought I would get.”

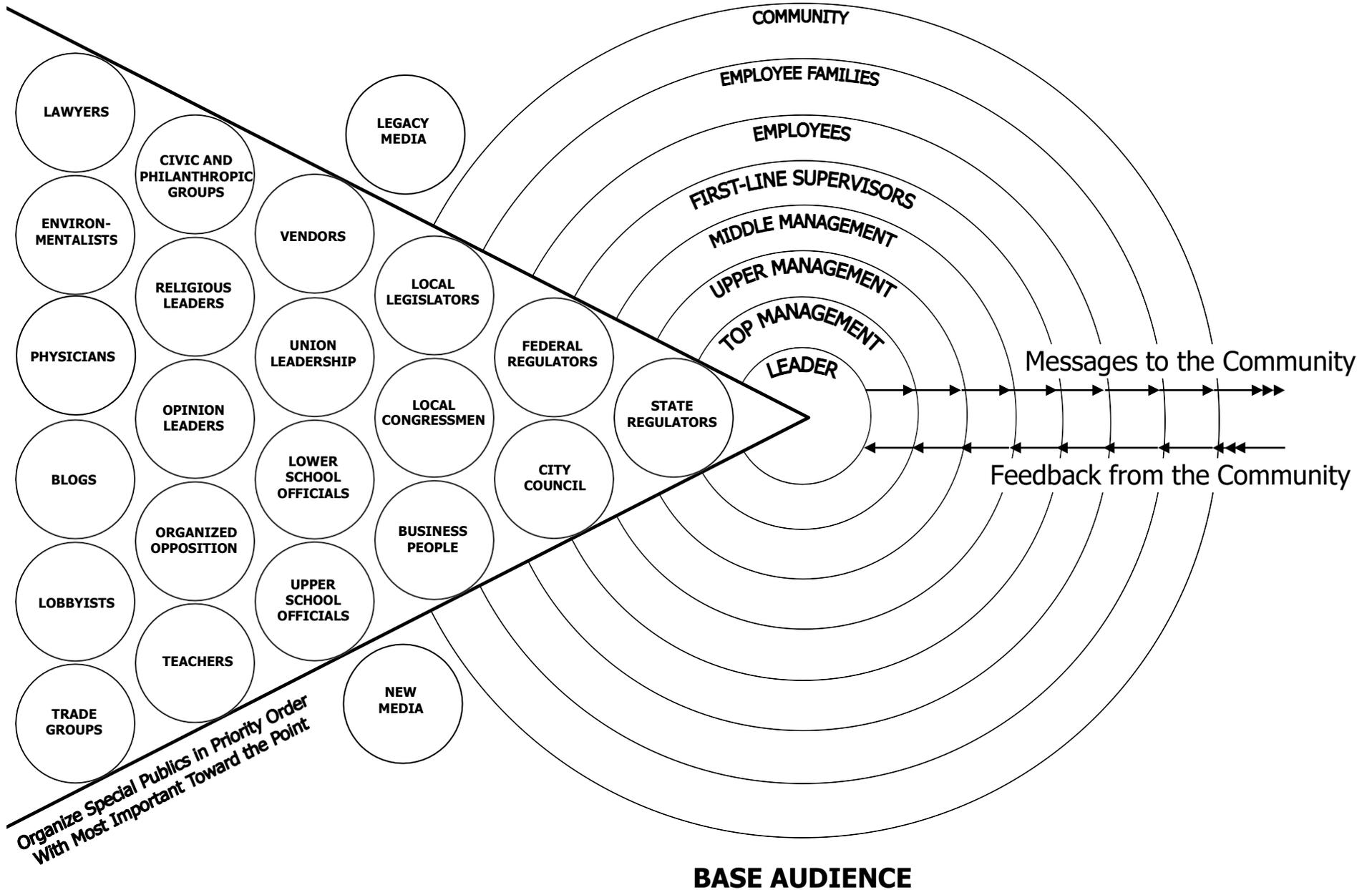
5. **Engagement failure by Top Management and Leaders.** This is the most crucial ingredient to any employee communication strategy. Leaders must have the courage and the strategic foresight to leapfrog Middle Management and have an ongoing conversation and relationship with First-line Supervisors. First-line Supervisors are kind of like Crew Chiefs or Master Sergeants in the military. The place falls apart unless these individuals are there to run it in a knowledgeable, useful, and helpful way every day. It is the boss’ job to get out to the Supervisors on a regular basis to brief them, coddle them, compliment them, cite their successes, help them learn from their failures, and force them to pull information from those above them (in Middle and Upper Management).

Can it be this simple, you ask? In practice, it requires discipline and a genuine commitment by managers at every level to recognize the need to cascade information further down the process. By the same token, managers need to make sure that appropriate feedback gets pushed up the line and actually reaches top management.

Management’s goal in employee communications is to connect with and direct 51 percent of those who matter. If 51 percent of those who matter can work together, the success of virtually any organization will be assured.

# Ridgeway Strategic Audience Analysis Worksheet

## SPECIAL PUBLICS



**POSITIVE DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE**

<b><u>Negative Approach</u></b>	<b><u>Positive Approach</u></b>
1. I don't believe it . . . or you.	Here's what I believe/Here's what we believe.
2. It won't work, it never worked.	Let me make a suggestion that might make it work, or let me find someone who can make a suggestion that might make it a more useful idea.
3. It's not the place for everyone.	Here's the kind of person who will be successful here.
4. Not everyone is willing to pay the price to work here.	This is a tough, challenging, interesting place to work. The commitment is high and the work is often difficult. It requires serving others every minute of the day.
5. That's a lie.	Check the facts more carefully and you'll find . . .
6. That's not our style.	We're known, even respected for . . .
7. We don't do that.	Here's what we actually do.
8. We don't invest in benefits our employees won't use.	We have three categories of employees here: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The core team. Those who are committed to the program.</li><li>2. Somewhere around the core. Those who want to be here for a long time but may or may not make the core team.</li><li>3. Transients. Those will be with us for only a short period of time.</li></ol>
9. We've never done that.	This is what we did specifically . . .
10. You're wrong.	The facts are . . .

## Profiles in Failure: Behavior Patterns That Precipitate and Perpetuate Trouble

By James E. Lukaszewski

*ABC, Fellow IABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, BEPS Emeritus*

Sometimes the only way to help organizations avoid embarrassment, humiliating visibility, enormous litigation, and just plain stupidity is to illustrate dramatically the pattern of behaviors and attitudes that lead to catastrophic reputational trouble. I call this pattern “Profiles in Failure.” These behaviors can be easily recognized and their impact predicted. If you are looking for trouble, here’s the way to quickly multitask your way into long-term difficulty.

1. **Silence:** The most toxic strategy possible. Makes you look like a perpetrator, whether true or not. There is no credible way to explain silence in the face of crisis. Silence is the most frequent career killer in crisis situations.
2. **Stalling:** Speed beats smart every time. Failure to act immediately, even incorrectly, is impossible to explain or apologize for. Doing nothing, even for what appear to be good reasons, is never explainable.
3. **Denial:** Refuse to accept the fact that something bad has happened and that there may be victims or other direct effects that require prompt public acknowledgement.
4. **Victim Confusion:** Irritable reaction to reporters, angry neighbors, and victims’ families when they call asking for help, information, explanation, or apology. “Hey! We’re victims too.”
5. **Testosterosis:** Look for ways to hit back, rather than to deal with the problem. Refuse to give in, refuse to respect those who may have a difference of opinion or a legitimate issue.
6. **Arrogance:** Reluctance to apologize, express concern or empathy, or to take appropriate responsibility because, “If we do that, we’ll be liable,” or, “We’ll look like sissies,” or, “We’ll set a precedent,” or, “There will be copycats.”
7. **Search for the Guilty:** Shift blame anywhere you can while digging into the organization, looking for traitors, turncoats, troublemakers, those who push back, and the unconvinced.
8. **Fear of the Media:** As it becomes more clear that the problem is at least partly real, the media begin asking, “What did you know, and when did you know it?”, “What have you done, and when did you do it?”, and other humiliating, embarrassing, and damaging questions for which there are no really good, truthful answers anymore because you have stalled so long.
9. **Whining:** Head down, finger in your navel, shuffling around, whining, and complaining about how bad your luck is, about being a victim of the media, zealous do-gooders, wacko-activists, or people don’t know anything; about how people you don’t respect have power; and, that you “don’t get credit” for whatever good you’ve already contributed.

Execute these behaviors in any order and I guarantee trouble, serious reputation problems, and brand damage. By the time you recover – if you do – some career-defining moments and a new team may replace you and yours.

## THREE KINDS OF QUESTIONS

There are only three kinds of questions:

1. Killer Questions: The kind that irritate, agitate, humiliate.
2. QYWLTRTIOSWAY: Questions you would love to respond to if only someone would ask you.
3. Google Questions: We are all on the Web somewhere.

Here is a bit about each:

### 1. Killer Questions:

Generally these are questions that 1) involve us in making unnecessary or inappropriate comments because of incomplete or unverified information; 2) involve litigation (our own legal actions or lawsuits filed against us), proprietary, or classified information; 3) include information that will hurt those involved or require us to disparage others, speculate, or make forecasts we are unqualified to make; or 4) embarrass us, make us angry, or are questions that we just don't like.

### 2. Questions You Would Love to Respond to if Only Someone Would Ask You:

Because only we really know our business, we can't expect the kinds of questions we would really like to respond to from outsiders. Preparing these kinds of questions and answers is the spokesperson's responsibility. In advance, think about the kinds of questions to which we would like to respond and develop appropriate answers. We can bridge to them when asked other kinds of questions. Do this preparation before the interview or questioning takes place. The last time you want to practice bridging to your better answers for the first time is when you are on the question firing line.

### 3. Google Questions:

In more than half of all news media interviews conducted each year, the interview subject is asked about topics, issues, and questions that relate to another company or person in their industry, business, or circumstance. Expect that you will be asked these kinds of questions. Why? Because reporters and others can quickly search the web and even the daily newspapers before they come and talk to you. So on the days you are going to be interviewed or answer questions, be sure you look yourself and your organization up on the Web. Look for potential Killer Questions and, of course, Questions You Would Love to Respond to if Only Someone Would Ask You.

## USING POWER WORDS AND PHRASES

### Avoiding Color Words and Threats

Power Words and Phrases have the magical ability to get or keep you out of trouble and to move you and others in positive, constructive directions. These words counteract and detoxify the sticky, corrosive, destructive power of negative words and concepts.

The need for Power Words is essential to most of us, especially when we find ourselves in difficult, challenging and often murky, negative situations. The tendency upon hearing negative, emotional or accusatory language is to repeat and then respond. Power Words enable you to avoid repeating negative words and inflammable phrases, and to move in very constructive directions from the very beginning. Some examples:

### CONTRAST ANALYSIS

Negative, Emotional, Accusatory Language	Power Word Responses
1. So you admit you bungled the chance to do this properly...	1. What we did was essential and important to resolving the issues these individuals faced.
2. Many thought your behavior was simply weird and uncalled for.	2. We first identified the crucial issues we felt needed discussion and proceeded to empathetically and powerfully work to resolve the questions.
3. How do you respond to this aggravating and unfortunate situation?	3. Three actions: detect the issues; deter future negative actions; and provide essential and critical advice to move beyond the existing problem and situation.
4. Even some Wall Street analysts say your company should be ashamed of what it did. How humiliating is this for your company?	4. The significant facts are these: first, we always acted with empathy and responsibility; second, our culture has a strong sense of what is right and what to avoid. Our actions, as well as our words, demonstrate our commitment to these concepts. Finally, the most crucial information is that provided by victims and survivors. They uniformly praise our simple, sincere, sensible and responsible approach to their problems.
5. You stand accused of being callous, careless, arrogant, and insensitive. How many of these allegations are true?	5. Three things about our behavior and intentions are true: Everything we've been doing has been preauthorized by those most directly affected; our actions and intentions have been clear, we have been candid, and we have been truthful in every instance; lastly, as events unfold, responsible and knowledgeable commentary will prevail, but there will always be a handful of critics who remain to be convinced. We are being as direct and forceful with these individuals and organizations as we can be, telling our story and listening carefully for the views and comments they're expressing.

## POWER WORDS

Power Words are the words of tomorrow and have the energy and the punch to get attention and help surge beyond the negative and the emotional. Power Words provide a sense of constructive positivity that can move your conversation, issues and ideas to much more constructive, helpful and successful territory. Power Words add the simple, sensible, positive, constructive and forceful ingredients to power up your language and intentions. Words like:

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Aggressive   | 26. New         |
| 2. Attack       | 27. Powerful    |
| 3. Authorize    | 28. Prevent     |
| 4. Avoid        | 29. Prioritize  |
| 5. Candid       | 30. Protect     |
| 6. Clear        | 31. Purposeful  |
| 7. Crucial      | 32. Responsible |
| 8. Critical     | 33. Seasoned    |
| 9. Defend       | 34. Sensible    |
| 10. Detect      | 35. Significant |
| 11. Deter       | 36. Simple      |
| 12. Different   | 37. Sincere     |
| 13. Direct      | 38. Steady      |
| 14. Emphasize   | 39. Strip       |
| 15. Empathize   | 40. Strong      |
| 16. Energize    | 41. Surge       |
| 17. Essential   | 42. Surprised   |
| 18. Exciting    | 43. Tender      |
| 19. Fascinating | 44. Tough       |
| 20. Forceful    | 45. Truthful    |
| 21. Important   | 46. Unique      |
| 22. Intentional | 47. Unusual     |
| 23. Legitimize  | 48. Urgent      |
| 24. Necessary   | 49. Valuable    |
| 25. Needed      |                 |

## POWER PHRASES

Power Phrases consist mainly of numbered bundles of adjectives. The use of this technique in speaking and writing is extremely powerful. In both of these instances, speaking and writing, if you use the technique you will literally force people to write things down or take better notes than they might have otherwise.

### Rule 1 for Power Packages:

Keep the number of ingredients or components low, generally four or fewer. Three seems to be an optimal number. We're talking about:

- Three Angles
- Three Attempts
- Three Decisions
- Three Elements
- Three Increments
- Three Ingredients
- Three Opinions
- Three Options
- Three Parts
- Three Perspectives
- Three Phases
- Three Stages
- Three Steps
- Three Units

Some other examples could include the use of a single, powerful circumstance, such as, "The single, most important ingredient in this formula is..." or, "The most urgent issue we currently face is..."

The smaller the number, the more powerful the statement.

Some examples of two component phrases include,

- "Your choice is between action and inaction."
- "Let's just start with the two worst circumstances you face and see what we can generate from there."
- "A couple of things are on my mind."

These power phrases make you more important, more influential, more memorable, and share those enhanced attributes and skills with those around you. Most of all, this technique forces people to write down what you're talking about, which is one of the most important actions you can create in someone you're trying to help, guide or direct.

## AVOIDING COLOR WORDS

These words always create bad news. Avoid them. Power your way past them with Power Words and Power Phrases.

Afraid	Delinquent	Harmful	Sad
Agitated	Demean	Hateful	Sarcastic
Aggravate	Deny	Hopeless	Scared
Alarmed	Despair	Hostile	Scum
Alleged	Desperation	Humiliated	Self-pity
Anger	Despicable	Hurt	Selfish
Angry	Destroy	Icky	Sellout
Anguish	Destructive	Idiot	Sham
Antagonize	Deteriorate	Ignorant	Shame
Anxious	Disappointed	Immature	Shameful
Apathetic	Disarray	Incompetent	Shatter
Appalled	Discontented	Inept	Sick
Apprehensive	Discouraged	Inappropriate	Silly
Argue	Discriminate	Irritated	Sissy
Arrogant	Disdain	Lies	Skunk
Ashamed	Disgusted	Litigate	Slander
Assassinate	Dismiss	Lousy	Slash
Attack	Disrespect	Mad	Sloppy
Awful	Distorted	Mangled	Stinky
Bad	Distraught	Mangy	Struggle
Betrayed	Disturbed	Manipulate	Stupid
Blame	Dopey	Mean	Surrender
Blasted	Doubtful	Meek	Tampering
Bombs	Dumb	Messy	Tarnish
Bored	Duplicity	Minimize	Tense
Botched	Ecotage	Miserable	Terrible
Brainwashed	Embarrassed	Monopoly	Terrified
Bungled	Embattled	Nag	Terror-stricken
Buried	Endanger	Negligent	Terrorized
Capitulate	Enraged	Out-of-touch	Threatened
Catastrophic	Evil	Overwhelmed	Toxic
Collusion	Eviscerate	Overzealous	Tragic
Conceal	Excessive	Outrageous	Traitor
Confused	Exaggerate	Painful	Tumultuous
Conspire	Exposed	Panicky	Ugly
Contempt	Face-saving	Petrified	Unbelievable
Corrosive	Fat	Pitiful	Uncomfortable
Cover-up	Fearful	Poisonous	Underhanded
Cringe	Fight	Profiteering	Undermine
Critical	Foolish	Questionable	Uneasy
Crooked	Frightened	Racist	Unhappy
Curious	Frustrating	Regret	Unimportant
Damaging	Furious	Repudiate	Unlucky
Danger	Goofy	Resentful	Unnecessary
Deadly	Gratuitous	Resigned	Unreal
Deceitful	Greedy	Rip-off	Unsure
Defeated	Guilty	Rotten	Weird
Defective	Harassed	Sabotage	Worried
Defensive			

## WHAT NEWS IS – FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

1. About people
2. Accessibility
3. Ask the reporter
4. Body count
5. Chronology
6. Interesting
  - Reports
  - Success stories
  - Analysis of key business issues:
    - Business
    - Defense
    - Education; Health
    - Law
    - Technology
7. Predictable
8. Reporter oriented
9. Tells a story
10. Timely
11. Topical
12. Understandable

## WHAT NEWS IS – FROM THE REPORTER'S PERSPECTIVE

1. Affects people, animals, or the environment
2. Change
3. Conflict:
  - From outside
  - From inside
  - From organized opposition
4. Confrontation
5. Danger
6. Editorial perspective
7. Extremes
8. Failure
9. Mistakes
10. Reporter's interests
11. Secrets
12. Unusual
13. Vulnerabilities
14. Weaknesses
15. What that effect is

## WHERE REPORTERS COME FROM

1. **Philosophic Spectrum:** The people's side.
2. **School:** To save the world from something.
3. **Training:** Aggression, hostility, and skepticism.
4. **Occupation:** They are production workers.
5. **Attitude:** They can't know/can't care.
6. **Workload:** They do perhaps 1,000 interviews a year.
7. **Feelings:** They don't know/don't care.
8. **Chain of Command:** They have bosses, too.

**Exhibit # 40**

**YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH REPORTERS: BE PROFESSIONAL**

1. Set objectives.
2. Do your homework on reporters.
3. Do your homework on their medium.
4. Understand the nature of the relationship.
5. Establish your own internal ground rules.

**Exhibit # 41**

**YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH BLOGGERS, BLOVIATORS,  
BELLYACHERS AND BACK-BENCH CRITICS**

1. Watch.
2. Read.
3. Track.
4. Think twice before responding.
5. Respond in your own medium. Extract comments and posts and put them on your own website in a special area for corrections and clarification.

## YOUR RIGHTS AS AN INTERVIEWEE IN LEGACY MEDIA

1. Know who is interviewing you and on whose behalf.
2. Know the content and the direction of the story.
3. Know who the reporter is talking to and what they said.
4. Know, understand, and set ground rules:
  - When (ask for the reporter's deadline)
  - Time (do interviews when you are at your best)
  - Place (somewhere other than in your office)
  - Length (30 minutes; or 30 minutes followed by a 30-minute break followed by a 10-to-15 minute wrap up)
  - Topic (what you will actually talk about)
  - Type (stand up; sit down; electronic – telephone and radio; or print)
5. Record all interviews on audiotape

## YOUR RIGHTS AS A SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENT SUBJECT

- You have no rights.