

# Contemporary Legends of **Public Relations**

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## Jim Lukaszewski's Prologue

### “How did you do it, what was your plan?”

January 30, 2024

Perhaps the most important lesson I learned was while serving as an adult Metro State University intern from 1972-1974 on the Press staff of former Minnesota Gov. Wendell R Anderson, then as an Assistant Press Secretary to the Governor from mid-1974 to December 1976.

I had the chance to watch and sometimes work with important people and occasionally leaders in the state, National reporters and politicians and celebrities of all kinds. Many brought problems and questions to the governor and his staff. The lesson was that the problems these people faced could only be resolved through superior leadership skills combined with positive, strategic, and ethical communication. Taking other paths always leads to worse trouble, failure, or both.

This learning continued, as I was appointed director of publicity and publications including state tourism promotion for the Minnesota Department of Economic Development (DED) in January 1976 and in 1977 as DED's Deputy Commissioner. This lesson has been repeatedly reinforced throughout my professional life.

My original aspiration was pretty simple. I wanted to have an important, constructive, and memorable impact on the lives of the people and organizations I helped. My intention was to help them change their lives, for their benefit, from their perspective, in productive ways through our interactions. My larger intention was also to change the way public relations is practiced in America.

My goal in working with other public relations professionals and all staff functions, law, Security, Strategic Planning, Human Resources, Finance, Advertising, Leadership Staff, Marketing, IT, Compliance, Accounting, and Mid-Level Operations is to help them learn to have happier, successful, and more important influence, access, acceptance and impact in their professional lives.

Fundamentally I am a teacher, mostly of ethical behavior. My approach is based on the definition of ethics published in 1926 by the American Philosopher Will Durant in his book, *The Story of Philosophy*. *Ethics is the search for ideal behavior*, simple, sensible, understandable, doable, recognizable, and clearly useful. Following what I teach and coach my clients, colleagues, students, and anyone my life and work touches enables them to build a legacy they and their organizations and the people they care about can be proud of.

During my career following government service in 1978, I worked with more than 400 mostly American and Canadian companies and organizations of all kinds. My practice also took me to Central and South America and occasionally Europe. Together we worked through some 350 different problem scenarios over more than 40 years. I've written 13 books, hundreds of articles,

monographs, newsletters, webinars, seminars, and public appearances. America's Crisis Guru® was trademarked in 2011.

One of my most important tasks is helping leaders be conscious of their legacy for the benefit of future leaders and others, and sometimes to simply inspire the uninspired. The largest consumer group for my teachings and writings at some point always asked the question, "How did you do it, what was your plan, why did you have such an interesting career?"

The disappointment is evident when I tell them that although I tried to lead an intentional life, doing meaningful work, my career was largely a series of accidents, mistakes, and hopes that happened and hopes that I didn't know I had. Being in the right place at the wrong time, the wrong place at the right time, the obsession to be first in line, whether or not there was one; just being there.

The biggest factors that I can identify, and that people have told me about are being relentlessly optimistic tempered with a big streak of pragmatism; being early for everything, responding quicker than fast, being intentionally inconsistent (which made me right most of the time, often the only one). Inconsistency is the most powerful tool of the strategist.

Around 2010, at a seminar for aspiring leaders, I was asked, "Where did I get my optimism? . . . with all the pressures of crisis?" What came out of my brain was this, "I have always believed that despite whatever I've already done, I have yet to do the most important thing I will ever do." Echoes of a fateful conversation I had long ago with Chester Burger, extraordinary practitioner, PR industry leader, mentor, personal counselor, boss, and lifetime friend. Today may be that day is what gets me started every day.

If you'd like a complete copy of this publication with all biographies, e-mail [jel@e911](mailto:jel@e911), subject line Legends. Happy to email it to you (it's 160 pages) or leave your snail mail address, and a copy will be mailed to you.

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## Contemporary Legends of Public Relations: Forward

Dr. Betty J. Pritchard

There are a number of excellent publications detailing the history of public relations in the United States. Most of these include descriptions of the early pioneers of the profession and their contributions, including influential people such as Edward Bernays, Arthur Page, Leone Baxter and Ivy Ledbetter Lee. These people helped to shape the practice of public relations into a viable profession.

However, public relations is a rapidly changing profession, mostly because of the pressures and demands of an empowered public on today's corporations and organizations. Public relations has moved beyond a focus on publicity to the task of building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships. Key publics now have more ready access to information, accurate or not, and higher expectations for the performance of their communities' organizations. New crisis management techniques are necessary for new types of issues that organizations face. Public opinion is much more powerful than it was just a few decades ago, and the management of its influence more important.

Clearly, the job of the profession's pioneers is not completed. New leaders have emerged and will continue to redefine the profession and the practice. There are very few sources, however, that detail the contributions of these current leaders. Though only the passage of time and a historical perspective can identify the depth of the influence of current leaders, it is nonetheless important to monitor the changes in practice they invoke and to objectively ponder their long-term value.

The purpose of this book is to document the contributions of contemporary leaders of the public relations profession. While there is no guarantee their actions will have a great impact on the future of the profession, there are certainly indicators of such. The people chosen for inclusion in this publication have been recognized in some way by the profession. Most are members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and have received awards or special designations by some professional organization.

The true value of this effort has been the ability to interview most of these people while they are still alive or even still working in their profession. Their feelings, motives, rejoices and regrets are often included with the descriptions of their contributions. In some cases, colleagues who

worked with them and knew them well were also interviewed. Additional facts and other information have been researched and cited as well.

This book serves as a reader for practitioners and students of the public relations profession. Its research base can also provide a foundation and resource for those who may wish to write a complete biography in the future on any of the individuals included in this text.

Other selections that are currently available to tell the story of contemporary figures from the public relations profession are usually autobiographies, such as *A Passion for Winning* by Aaron Cushman, *Life S Snapshots* by Norman Wolfson, and *The Dear Betty Chronicles* by Morris Rotman. This book is different in that it is a collection of biographical sketches of people chosen specifically for their leadership and contribution to the profession. It was researched and written by graduate students in the School of Communications at Grand Valley State University in the 2004-2005 academic year.

## The Master of Crisis Management: James E. Lukaszewski

Dottie Barnes

James E. Lukaszewski's global Crisis Public Relations practice occupies a very special niche. He spends just a few hours with many of his clients, but the impact he makes lasts for a client's career, some clients say for a lifetime. He has guided hundreds of companies out of tough, touchy, extremely sensitive situations. As president and chairman of The Lukaszewski Group in White Plains, New York, Lukaszewski's goal is to change management behavior in constructive, ethical ways. A prolific author, he travels the country, and often internationally, teaching, lecturing and public speaking about crisis management, ethics and management strategy. Lukaszewski is the recipient of a number of prestigious awards including Ball State University's National Public Relations Achievement Award and the 2004 Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to the Public Relations Society of America.

The very mention of his name or his presence in a room usually means there is trouble - and probably the worst kind. That doesn't bother James E. Lukaszewski; he has dedicated his life to helping people and some of the largest corporations in the world handle crisis situations. When it comes to crisis management, his name and unique style are known to top executives and public relations practitioners around the globe.

Lukaszewski has admittedly worked with some of the most well-known corporations and organizations, which he keeps confidential. Many of the sensitive situations he has handled remain private - something Lukaszewski is hired to specifically accomplish (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

The author of five books and over 130 articles, Lukaszewski is quoted in such publications as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Harvard Business Review* and industry trade journals. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies That Reduce the Media's Power*, has become a classic work in the field of direct communication (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d.). The introduction of the book was written by longtime friend and advisor Chet Burger:

Jim Lukaszewski has seen it all, and been through it all. He bases his strong opinions on long experience. This book summarizes that experience and wisdom. I think his analysis is 100% right. The corporation or organization executive who faces attack (and few do not in this era) will find valuable counsel in these too few pages (Lukaszewski, 1992, p. VII).

Lukaszewski is a frequent columnist for *PR News*; *O'Dwyer's PR Services Report*; The Public Relations Society of America's magazine, *The Strategist*; the International

Association of Business Communicator's magazine, *Communication World*; and *Public Relations Quarterly*.

His experience includes coaching spokespersons for public appearances and television interviews during times of crisis and bad publicity, including television news programs such as *20-20*, *60 Minutes*, *Dateline NBC*, *Nightline* and *The Fifth Estate* in Canada (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d.). He travels the country lecturing and speaking on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs and reputation restoration. He has conducted countless workshops and Web-based seminars.

An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR), Lukaszewski is also a member of the PRSA's College of Fellows. He is active in the American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS), a trade association for corporate security directors in the United States and the Western Hemisphere.

Lukaszewski has been a strong influence on the ethical practice of public relations in America and globally. He was a key participant in the rewriting of the PRSA Code of Ethics from 1998 to 2000. During that time, Lukaszewski was a key liaison between PRSA and an international organization called the Global Exchange, as they attempted to develop a global Code of Conduct. He has been appointed to a fifth three-year term and is the longest serving member of the PRSA Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS) (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d.).

Lukaszewski's biography is listed in the Marquis 55<sup>th</sup> Millennium, and in the 56<sup>th</sup>, 57<sup>th</sup> and 58<sup>th</sup> editions of *Who's Who in America*. His name also appeared in *Corporate Legal Times* as one of "28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose" and in *PR Week* as one of 22 "crunch-time

counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis" (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d., para. 8).

Lukaszewski is a consultant who really does counsel CEOs and has personally guided thousands of executives through catastrophic times. Clients, co-workers and friends of Lukaszewski agree he has the rare ability to see through a crisis to do more than solve a problem; he changes management behavior. Some, like former long-time employee Mary Ann N. Cotton (personal communication, February 20, 2005) say the companies Lukaszewski advises come out of a sensitive situation better than before they had a problem. Lukaszewski is credited with redefining the way disasters should be handled - dubbed by former client Sandy Dean as, the "Yoda" or master of crisis management (S. Dean, personal communication, February 25, 2005).

#### A Varied Background Proved Helpful

Those closest to Lukaszewski agree that much of what has made him a success were traits he must have been born with. He was born August 27, 1942, to Edmund (Luke) and Virginia Lukaszewski, in Kewaunee, Wisconsin, near Lake Michigan. His family moved to Minneapolis when he was three. Lukaszewski is the second of four children and the only boy (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

His father, Luke, worked at Franklin Junior High School; known as the toughest junior high school in Minneapolis, with the toughest kids as well. His father taught English, band, choir and social studies, was a card-carrying member of the ACLU and a union steward for 29 years.

He was a tough man, but a man of amazing knowledge. He spoke six languages; Polish, Latin, German, English, Spanish and Russian. In his own words, 'He spent his career teaching kids to read.' My father was an intellectual rebel; his greatest regret was that he was never arrested and jailed for leading a teachers strike against the Minneapolis School Board. (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005)

His mother, Virginia, worked 30 years as a librarian. Both of his parents were college graduates, considered unique during The Depression. They were active in politics and both were gifted musically. The music gene was passed down to their son, evident in his trumpet playing and his dance band known as the "Esquires." He started the group at age 14 and the passion lasted for the next nine years. Big Band songs were a favorite to play (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

Luke and Virginia also passed along their love for reading and learning to their children. It was common place for the family to talk about current events and newspaper stories at the dinner table, and for Luke to express how work

went that day. "While my mother was setting the table, my dad would talk about school. First, how the board of education screwed the principals. Then, during the meal, we would hear how the principals screwed the teachers. By dessert we would know how the teachers would get back at the principal the next day" (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

But dinnertime was also a time used for learning. "We had an eight-inch thick dictionary on a stand in the dining room," said Lukaszewski, "and my dad would purposely use big words. We would have to look up the words we didn't understand, and use them in a sentence before we could leave the table" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

By age 14, Lukaszewski was already establishing his independence and work ethic. He spent a lot of time working and less time at home. As a teenager, he became an Explorer Scout through the Viking Council of the Boy Scouts of America. He joined a special program known as EX-1. He received advanced rescue and first aid training by the Minneapolis fire department. "Our jobs were very much like today's paramedics," he remembered. "We would assist the fire department during fires, major accidents and plane crashes. It was quite an experience being a teenager and dragging for dead bodies or resuscitating victims" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

In 1960, he graduated from Robbinsdale High School. Lukaszewski continued doing rescue work, performing in his dance band and tried college for the first time. He also started working part time at the Schmitt Music Company, after being recommended by his high school band director, Robert Mendenhall. Lukaszewski enrolled at Macalester College, a private liberal arts college in St Paul. He wanted to be a scientist and signed up for courses in chemistry, physics and calculus. While he enjoyed and understood the sciences, calculus was a different story and Lukaszewski flunked out at the end of his first year. He is known for his resistance to accept failure and it showed in 1961, when Lukaszewski decided to get coaching to build his math skills. He accomplished this by taking night courses at the University of Minnesota, while continuing to work in retail management and sales for Schmitt Music (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

The '60s brought a big personal change in Lukaszewski's life. Barbara Bray, his high school sweetheart, became his wife in 1964. The two met in 1960 on band trip to Chicago when he was 18 and she was 16. Barbara recalled how her husband showed early signs of success. "I played the flute and I wasn't the best. And, there was Jim. He was so handsome with that red hair. He was the first-chair trumpet player" (personal communication, March 15, 2005).

In the five years that followed, they had two sons, Charles Todd and James Moir. Their sons would grow up

to be entrepreneurs in the PR business as the inventors of eWatch, the first Internet news monitoring service. PR newswire purchased eWatch in 2001 (B. Lukaszewski, personal communication, March 15, 2005).

In 1962, while still working for Schmitt Music, Lukaszewski decided to re-enroll at Macalester with a Liberal Arts and English focus for one year to reestablish his grade point average. Influenced by his uncle, Henry Kowalski, who was a successful pharmacist, he left Macalester in 1963 to enroll in the pharmacy school at the University of Minnesota. Again, the high-level math got the best of him. In 1966, he left pharmacy school, and was accepted in the management training program at Schmitt Music. He resumed his night school studies.

The deep recession of the late '60s hit the music industry hard and, in 1969, Schmitt Music began cutting back its management positions. Lukaszewski was laid off - and he remembers every detail. "I've never forgotten how it feels to lose your job without your permission or agreement. Today it helps me relate to clients that have been in, or are about to be in, the same situation" (personal communication, April 6, 2005). It didn't take long for Lukaszewski to find new employment; his experience in pharmacy school helped him land a job as a pharmaceutical salesman for Bristol Laboratories, a division of Bristol Myers.

During this time, Jim and Barbara were active in their community, giving speeches and planning events for various organizations. Barbara was a city parks commissioner and Jim was a police civil service commissioner. A community colleague approached Lukaszewski one day and told him something he would never forget.

"He told me I was good at public relations. I asked, 'What is public relations?' He looked at me kind-of funny. After he got over the shock, he sent me to see someone who could really tell me" (personal communication, April 5, 2005). That person was Gerry Wollan, then senior vice president for the Minnesota-based PR firm Padilla & Speer.

Lukaszewski's conversation with Wollan convinced him to pursue work in public relations at Bristol, but the company required a college degree. The company was willing to pay for college classes and the third time proved to be a charm. In 1972, he enrolled at Metropolitan State College [now University!] in St. Paul - this time putting his emphasis on political public relations (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

Lukaszewski left his mark at Metropolitan. On April 14, 1974, at age 32, Lukaszewski earned his Bachelor of Arts degree. He was among the first 100 graduates of the college. In the fall of 1974, he became the first graduate elected by the student body to head the school's Alumni Association. In 1975, he became the first student trustee at the college's Foundation. In 2003, he became only the second graduate selected to give a commencement address

(before 3000 people). "I like to believe that others can be inspired to try to graduate by telling them that it took me 14 years to get my degree" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

Lukaszewski's curiosity and tenacity would soon pay off, as he credits his varied background with helping him achieve great client understanding.

While a student, Lukaszewski began an internship in January of 1973 in the office of then-Minnesota Governor Wendell R. Anderson. "They called me the 'old guy' because at 32, I was pretty old compared to the other interns" (personal communication, February 13, 2005). Lukaszewski worked hard and his internship turned into a permanent job. He was the assistant press secretary to the governor (as an intern, later as a full-time employee) - a position that would do more than put food on the table; it would be a pivotal event and the basis for an extremely successful career.

"This is where Jim found his niche," said Barbara. "He found that one magic thing - like a silver bullet ... a gold bullet" (personal communication, March 15, 2005).

As assistant press secretary, Lukaszewski briefed reporters daily on the governor's activities, handling everything from radio and television appearances to special events. "I was mostly in charge of all of the bad news. When I would walk into the governor's office, he knew there was trouble" (personal communication, February 13, 2005). Lukaszewski knew how to get his work noticed by the boss. "When I would organize the governor's work on his desk, I would put the most important work on top - from his perspective, and he would always notice."

Lukaszewski said crisis management was a new thing in the '70s. He is credited by many for making crisis management a major discipline in PR through his speaking and writing.

The Lukaszewskis were exposed to a lifestyle that neither had growing up. Both grew up in blue-collar homes that exemplified the well-known strong Minnesota work ethic. "We would be invited to functions at the governor's mansion," said Barbara. "I remember one visit in the winter. There was snow on the ground, until we walked by his mansion. There were heating coils in the sidewalk. I had never heard of such a thing" (personal communication, March 15, 2005).

After two years of handling negative situations for the governor, Lukaszewski transferred to a controversial State department. In 1976, he became first the director of publicity and publications and six months later, deputy commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Economic Development. In another two years, Lukaszewski would decide to leave government employment for good and enter the crisis management field full time. In 1978, he and his wife, Barbara, founded MISC, Minnesota-based Media Information



Systems Corporation (*Who's Who*, 2003).

As president of his own company, Lukaszewski said he learned quickly that the dynamics of running a business weren't for him. He would rather leave most of the day-to-day details to Barbara. "I am a warrior I need to be out in the field" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

Over the next five years, as the pair built the company to eight employees, Lukaszewski said Barbara took over the enormous responsibility of running their New Brighton company while he met with and handled the needs of clients.

In 1982, Media Information Systems was acquired by Brum & Anderson, a large PR firm in Minneapolis, and Lukaszewski stayed on as part owner and division president, specializing in executive coaching and crisis management. He stayed in the position for two years before making yet another transition - perhaps the biggest one of his career (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, March 31, 2005).

Lukaszewski said after two years he was ready to leave the company to do something else. When a friend heard this, it would lead the Lukaszewskis away from Minnesota to a new life halfway across the country.

#### An Icon for a Mentor

Chester Burger, a longtime consultant to Barbara and Jim, is credited with being Lukaszewski's mentor and suggesting he could make it in the Big Apple. Burger called Lukaszewski when he heard his good friend was leaving Brum & Anderson. "Chet asked me, 'Where are you going to work tomorrow?' Surprised by the question, I told him I didn't have any plans because I didn't have a job. Five days later I was interviewing in New York (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, March 31, 2005).

"I remember talking with Jim," said Burger. "He was ready for a national market and I told him he would do well in New York. In 1986, Jim joined my consulting firm as a partner" (C. Burger, personal communication, February 18, 2005).

The Lukaszewskis packed up in July of 1986 and left Minnesota for New York, joining Chester Burger & Company. To say the company was well-established and well-known would be an understatement. It was the nation's first communications management consulting firm (About Chester Burger, n.d.). Burger, who spent most of his 48-year career in the communications field, is best known for becoming the nation's first television news reporter in 1946 when he worked for CBS. Burger enjoyed a long journalism and public relations career before establishing his management consulting firm in 1964. Lukaszewski would have the opportunity to work with some of the country's top corporations (C. Burger, personal communication, February

18, 2005).

"In the '70s and '80s, most of the larger PR firms relied on us for counsel," said Burger. "There weren't many real national crises that we weren't involved in" (personal communication, February 18, 2005).

The Burger company's clients included Sears Roebuck, American Bankers Association, the American Cancer Society and Texas Instruments, Inc. Burger was also a consultant for AT&T - a relationship that lasted 33 years until his retirement in 1988. Besides consulting for top corporations, Burger said most major PR firms called his company privately for advice.

Burger and Lukaszewski enjoyed a very trusted relationship. Burger said consulting at the level necessary for their clients required a special set of skills and his newest employee had them mastered.

We would know what to do for clients, but the challenge was how to communicate that to the CEO. The implication is that we are smarter and that we are telling the CEO what to do. Jim knew how to make the message psychologically acceptable to corporate executives. One of the greatest talents Jim has is that he knows how to listen; that is hard to do when you know the answer. Jim knows how to convey the fact they understand their problem. He learned that he has the ability to get the CEO off the defensive to get the job done. (personal communication, February 18, 2005)

Burger describes Lukaszewski as a rare commodity in that he is completely trustworthy. He said his longtime friend is someone who is open and straight, not devious; and, someone who has never made an indiscrete remark.

Burger said Lukaszewski also became very skilled at handling matters of public policy. "You know that famous quote by Mother Teresa," he said, "'Facing the press is more difficult than bathing a leper'" (personal communication, February 18, 2005).

Burger was getting close to retiring and his company was in transition as ownership changed. In 1987, under the recommendation of Burger, Lukaszewski left the company and took a position as vice president and director of Executive Communication Programs for Georgeson & Company in New York. Within eight months, he would be promoted to senior vice president. After two years at Georgeson, he left the company (it was being acquired by a British company). He started a new company and created the position he holds today - president and chairman of the board of The Lukaszewski Group Inc. (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005).

#### Scare the Hell Out of Them and Leave

Jerry Johnson, crisis manager for Brodeur Worldwide,

describes crisis communication as the original public relations discipline; one of the reasons why PR became a practice in the first place (Abouzeid, 2001). "People had to go through difficulty or explain some tragic event" (Abouzeid, para.1). Lukaszewski calls the management of bad news a "growth industry," and defines crisis as a "show-stopping, people-stopping, product-stopping, reputationally-defining event that causes victims and/or explosive visibility" (Abouzeid, para. 3). In an article for *Phillips PR News* (2001), Lukaszewski notes that crisis communication has been growing ever since the Exxon-Valdez oil disaster in 1989. He said Exxon-Valdez was more powerful in triggering a profession-wide focus on crisis management than the incident at Three Mile Island, seven years before.

Lukaszewski is known by friends and clients as a straight shooter; someone who is completely trustworthy, who tells it like it is. His reputation for candor - or what Lukaszewski calls truth with an attitude - helped him form The Lukaszewski Group. Founded in White Plains, New York in 1989, the company has a staff of four professionals and a number of special advisors, including a former intelligence officer and FBI special agent (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d.).

Lukaszewski intervenes to directly manage a client's problem, or helps guide management through the problem or brings in the resources to oversee the activities that need to take place. His most important role is directing and coaching leaders during a crisis. "Most clients call me after the situation is leaking, foaming, stinking, burning or worse. I like the really tough stuff" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

About a quarter of the time, Lukaszewski said he doesn't even meet his clients because the situation is so urgent, it requires that he convey immediate strategies and instructions to help resolve their problem over the phone or by e-mail. When he does connect in person, it's a quick meeting. Lukaszewski said during a typical engagement, he can complete his work within 48 hours. "I have trained myself to give advice on the spot," he said. "In the types of crises I handle, there is little time to set up meetings, form committees, take notes or ask questions. I'm brought in to rub their foreheads together; I give a few orders, scare the hell out of people so they'll take action now, and then leave." (personal communication, February 13, 2005)

#### Private Relations and Dutch Uncles

More management-focused than PR-focused is how Lukaszewski describes his approach to helping executives, calling his business more like private relations than public relations. He said it's always about the decisions that affect people, their destiny and their future.

When entering a crisis situation, he said he tries to look

at himself as the CEO's chief staff person. He said he puts himself in their shoes. "This sounds simple but it's tougher than it sounds. You have to care about the person you're advising; you must see the situation from their perspective, yet still seek and achieve an ethically satisfactory outcome" (personal communication, February 21, 2005).

In his lectures and writings about being a successful advisor, Lukaszewski talks about the importance of acting like a Dutch uncle.

Organizations are really built to succeed and my world is about what to do when that doesn't happen. Most organizations have a bias against recognizing failure so, what I do is, I act like their Dutch uncle - I care about them enough to tell them the absolute truth all the time. My job is to be a teacher of adults and to help adults solve adult problems. A great part of it is behavior and altering people's perceptions of themselves, their organizations and what they do in order to move on the problems they have to resolve. (Hlotyak, 2000, para. 3)

In a Web seminar on how to become a trusted advisor, conducted in February 2005, Lukaszewski told the nearly 700 people taking part, that when it comes to giving advice to CEOs, there are two things you must accomplish:

Consultants guide better than they manage; we'd rather give advice than run things. When you really get good at advising, you'll hear confessions; executives will share things. This is a crucial measure of your success. We are experts in some things. We have specialized knowledge. So, you must first learn to recognize your true strength and second, when you need help - get help. (personal communication, February 2005)

This message of trust and honesty is also conveyed to Lukaszewski's clients. He often cites a hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, run by the U.S. Veteran's Administration, as an example of an organization that learned how to manage a difficult situation. The hospital calls it Extreme Honesty; Lukaszewski calls it a victimization/litigation reduction program:

When they have an accident, a case of negligence or malpractice they employ extreme honesty. Not just an attitude, but also a policy with a review and communications process, to notify patients of negligence and help them get restitution, even encouraging them to involve their lawyer. The result is moderated claims experience - fewer lawsuits and lower payouts. (McGee, 2004, para. 11)

Lukaszewski is accustomed to giving advice to hundreds, even thousands of people in a month's time. Much of his business comes by referral but also from personal appearances. Lukaszewski attributes some of his success to the fact that he learns something from every client and situa-

tion he has handled, and he does his homework.

"It's important to not only know about the situation your client is in, but about the client themselves," he said. "What do you really know about them? What books do they like to read? What do you know about their mother?" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

#### Powerful Leaders and Their Mothers

Lukaszewski takes in enormous amounts of information every day. He is an avid reader and a student of leadership. He said much of what is written about major leaders shows they had a special relationship with their mothers. He points to President Clinton who had a strong, highly-publicized relationship with his mother, or former CEO of General Electric, Jack Welch, who played Rummy with his mother almost every day since he was a teenager, or former U.S. President Jimmy Carter. His mother, Lillian, became a celebrity in her own right and very visible at the White House.

It's a powerful phenomenon. I always ask a CEO about his or her parents. Knowing this enables me to make a much more powerful, personal connection. When an executive will soon or is experiencing a career defining moment, the chemistry between the two of us has to work very effectively and withstand some terrible strains, fears, uncertainties and doubts. When I first tried to explain to my mother exactly what I did with these very powerful and important people, she would get this puzzled look on her face and ask, "You get paid for talking about your mother?" I said, "Yes, handsomely." Mom may never have really understood what I do, but I know she always liked that I talked about her, and other people's mothers. (personal communication, February 13, 2005)

#### Tell Them What They Don't Know

Lukaszewski said one of the most powerful seminars he gives is about understanding how to think strategically and become a trusted advisor. He teaches that executives expect two crucial benefits from dealing with a trusted advisor: learning something they don't already know, and learning options for action about what to do next.

Mary Ann N. Cotton was the senior account manager for Burson-Marsteller in Washington, D.C. and program director for The Food and Drug Law Institute before joining The Lukaszewski Group from 1992-1997, as vice president. She said one of the most important things Lukaszewski taught her was that words have value.

Jim is engaging. People want to believe what he is saying; he makes sense. He is gifted at telling

wonderfully meaningful stories. He is commanding but professional; he has a presence about him that is not overbearing. He has an understanding of the client's business and looks five to 10 years down the pike. He taught me to always say things that matter. (M. Cotton, personal communication, February 20, 2005)

"Saying things that matter" is signature Lukaszewski. Much of his teachings and catch-phrases have become well-recognized, like a few of Cotton's favorites: say important things, speak like someone you'd like to listen to, and be 15 minutes early and one step ahead.

Another signature trait is his attitude toward the media.

#### It's Never About the Media

Crisis management, to some extent, involves dealing with the media. Lukaszewski said his approach and style when dealing with the media is somewhat different than other crisis counselors and PR practitioners in that, he simply lets them do what they're going to do:

The media are totally predictable and trustworthy. I know how they are going to behave, what their questions are going to be, which of my answers they will use and what I'm going to have to fix later. That is why I can ignore them. Never let the media drive your communication strategy. We must divorce ourselves from them and focus on solving problems. Honorable companies acting honorably are far less newsworthy. (personal communication, February 13, 2005)

Lukaszewski said while most PR practitioners put their initial effort into preparing a statement for the media, his job is to identify solution options and new behaviors for the company that will solve the underlying problem. "The media will try to keep a negative light on the situation no matter what is said or done. I understand and **work** against the pattern of their behavior" (personal communication, February 13, 2005).

Blanketing the community with press releases and massive campaigns is intrusive and uncontrollable ... it's the easy way out ... and it often fails. A much tougher, more responsible, and finally, a more effective strategy is to target, select and focus on, and then to communicate directly, clearly and forthrightly with those audiences directly affected. (Lukaszewski, 1992, p. 15)

Lukaszewski (1992) teaches that reducing the media's power means talking to the media primarily when it is in the interest of your strategy to do so, but the first priority is directly reaching those who are most directly affected (p. 31).

Chester Burger said it was to Lukaszewski's advantage that he came from a sales and marketing background rather than a journalism background. "Jim was never overwhelmed by the self importance of media" (personal communication, February 18, 2005).

#### The Tough, Touchy Stuff

Former client Sandy Dean refers to Lukaszewski as "Yoda," a character who is a master trainer of warriors in the Star Wars movie series. Understanding the reason for the reference means understanding the sensitive matter Dean was once involved in a few years back. As chairman of a medium-sized private business in California, Dean found his company and its investors the target of a group of critics. "They were persistent, tireless, angry critics," said Dean. "The group brought us a lot of negative media attention and allegations" (personal communication, February 25, 2005).

Dean said Lukaszewski was referred to him by an investor, and on July 4, 1998, they had an extraordinarily memorable first meeting by telephone.

My company had been dealing with these critics for two months when we called Jim. During our first meeting, he told us more about our critics in 15 minutes than we knew working with them for eight weeks. Jim didn't necessarily know about our critics, but he understood the psychology of the game being played. (personal communication, February 25, 2005)

Dean said Lukaszewski helped him and his company redefine their systematic approach to the situation. This was accomplished by making positive public statements and eliminating all negativity from their communication. "It wasn't natural for me," admitted Dean.

It's not natural for a lot of people because we don't realize we have negativity in our speech. Jim taught us that we could talk to the media for 30 minutes and if we say the word 'not' one time - that is the statement the media will use. (personal communication, February 25, 2005)

Dean said Lukaszewski helped him develop a three-pronged plan of action. The first step was establishing positive communication; the second was to establish fact-based communication because Lukaszewski knew that getting down to the facts would help take the emotion out of the situation; and third was to continuously publish a list of all the allegations and company responses to create a fact-based foundation for public discussion.

The critics were persistent for about two years, according to Dean, but he said Lukaszewski gave him some invaluable advice.

After our initial plan of action, Jim helped us plan for the long-term. We put together a comprehensive

Web site to communicate our message and combat the allegations against us. We also secured validation from a respected independent monitoring organization. (personal communication, February 25, 2005)

While Dean admits Lukaszewski's advice took a while to implement, he said the situation required more than a one-week fix.

Jim's advice withstands close scrutiny. He taught us that the psychology of the people we were dealing with is very distinct and that their cause was unassailable. He said we would never win over our critics, but that they would eventually move on to something else, and he was right. We all have critics in life; we just need to have enough positive ethical actions so they can't recruit more troops. (personal communication, February 25, 2005)

#### Observer and Critic

David Schilling first met Lukaszewski in 1996. The two worked closely for several years, but on opposite sides of the table. Schilling is the director of Global Corporate Accountability, an agency that adopts policies and procedures for the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility - a religious nonprofit organization that represents 275 religious institutions. Lukaszewski was representing a company whose practices had come under scrutiny in another country.

It was a unique project. It was a labor dispute that was getting a fair amount of media coverage in the U.S. Our organization was working to keep the public informed. We came to the table as religious shareholders wanting justice and fairness. (D. Schilling, personal communication, February 23, 2005)

Schilling said Lukaszewski's role was to help the company in crisis articulate its goals and messages. "Jim helped the company hammer out communication to the public," said Schilling, "but more than that, he was willing to listen to a variety of view points" (personal communication, February 23, 2005).

Schilling said Lukaszewski was able to build a level of trust quickly and was willing to listen instead of talk all of the time. "Jim developed trusting relationships and that's not something you buy - it doesn't always come with the territory" (personal communication, February 23, 2005).

The PR territory is constantly shifting, and, according to Lukaszewski, his clients are often at the leading

edges of these changes. He has a few reasons for the changing tide.

### The Wave of the Future

Lukaszewski said three of the most significant, current shifts in the public relations profession involve the increased threat of terrorism, an increase in litigation visibility and a new and more powerful role for communicators under the Sarbanes Oxley (SOX) laws.

The collapse of the twin towers caused the collapse of some PR firms. The public relations industry experienced great growth in the 1990s, but after September 11, the industry started to decline (Kennedy, 2001). Jack Bergen, past president of the Council of Public Relations Firms, said the industry faced its first period of negative growth since the early 1990s because of the terrorist attacks on the twin towers, the slowing economy and the meltdown of the dot-com sector.

For Lukaszewski, September 11 meant adding a new focus to crisis planning. In an October 2001 interview with Reuters, he said, "For some of the larger clients I'm talking to, we're working on getting ready for war" (Kennedy, 2001, para. 24).

In the wake of the attacks, Lukaszewski wrote a paper titled "Preparing for War" which helped companies coordinate their procedures involving employees called for military service. "Put in place brief, positive statement formats to use in the event that your company's employees are hurt, killed, or captured in combat or in military accidents," the paper explained (Kennedy, 2001, para. 26).

For the United States Marine Corps, he wrote another paper called, "News is the Enemy's Weapon - Dealing With the Terrorist Need for Current News Coverage of Military Activities" (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, April 5, 2005).

Lukaszewski notes there is an ever-increasing amount of communication needed between public relations practitioners and attorneys. He is a pioneer in the field of litigation public relations and spends time teaching lawyers how to talk, listen and become peacemakers.

As for litigation public relations, Lukaszewski pointed out that recent court decisions are important indicators that the legal system is recognizing that public opinion matters, and it is the attorney's job to manage public opinion outside the courtroom. One of the most recent cases, heard in June 2003, yielded the Kaplan Decision. U.S. District Judge Lewis A. Kaplan of the Southern District of New York, granted privilege to a

public relations consultant who was providing strategic legal advice to a lawyer. "Kaplan's decision addresses whether an attorney's efforts to shape public opinion to advance a legal strategy deserve privilege protections" (McDonough, 2003, para. 12). "Ultimately, Kaplan ordered the subpoenaed public relations witness to testify, but he specified that the witness only relate conversations about which there was no privilege claim" (McDonough, 2003, para. 15).

In many cases, Lukaszewski is retained by outside legal counsel. The retention agreement restricts his work to advising the attorneys on legal and trial communication strategy. His advice must be strategic to be protectable; routine PR advice could waive the privilege of his strategic advice. In other words, Lukaszewski said if he works with attorneys on the tone, tempo or direction of their case, that is protectable. Giving advice to an attorney on writing a press release or working with reporters is not protectable (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, April 7, 2005).

Perhaps the most profound and growing area for the public relations practitioner, according to Lukaszewski, is within the context of the so-called SOX laws, passed in 2002 and amended in 2004. These laws are in response to the continuing wave of corporate scandals over the last several years and likely to continue for several more years. SOX laws mandate the behavior of chief executives, boards of directors and employees in terms of compliance, standard of conduct, integrity and transparency (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, April 6, 2005).

Lukaszewski is already writing and explaining how practitioners can become involved in integrity education within public companies, starting with the CEO, senior managers and boards of directors. These laws require top corporate officials and leaders to be actively engaged creating, "an environment of integrity within their organizations." Lukaszewski said, in reality, the SOX laws mandate, backed up by criminal penalties, the establishment of ethical behavior within organizations (personal communication, April 6, 2005).

The point Lukaszewski makes is, in the past, practitioners have acted as self-appointed local moralists in their organizations - sometimes with the permission of top management but often in spite of top management. Under the SOX laws, PR people, if they choose to, can now have a seat at the table and there's a legal reason for them to be there.

Operating in a global environment provides some unusual and interesting ethical and business operation dilemmas. Globalization illustrates, every

day, a need for globally acceptable approaches to ethical dilemmas, and a set of standards to prevent pre-empt, detect or deter unacceptable behaviors. (Lukaszewski, 2004, p. 12)

### His Toughest Assignments

In 1991, a law firm client in western Canada asked Lukaszewski to begin working with nearly 100 elected and ancestral Indian chiefs of aboriginal tribes (called First Nations) preparing to negotiate treaty rights with the Federal Government of Canada. At stake was the future power base being conferred on these tribes by the Canadian Constitution through the return of lands taken from these tribes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lukaszewski said the communication challenge was cultural, political, painful, dominated by victimization and more than a century of dysfunctional living (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, April 7, 2005).

Their situation is very similar to that of Native American tribes. Their stories were overwhelming and emotionally draining. They had difficulty comprehending the enormous shift in beliefs and behaviors required to take advantage of the power and wealth they were about to receive. We once spent nearly eight hours working on understanding the concept of forgiveness as a way to move into the future and leap over much of their historic pain and humiliation. It was an impossible challenge for them. First and foremost, they wanted an apology for everything that had happened over the last 180 years. This was beyond what the country could provide that was politically satisfactory. For me, just a kid from Robbinsdale, Minnesota, to be sitting at the center of these amazing men and women (there were seven elected female chiefs at the time) was beyond extraordinary. Working with these tribal leaders is among some of the most emotionally enriching thinking and counseling of my career.

During another assignment in western Canada in the early 1990s, Lukaszewski served as the chief communication consultant and coach to the head of the Japanese Business Association of British Columbia (BC). Lukaszewski said the man represented 10 Japanese steel companies suing the BC Provincial government over a major coal production contract.

The Japanese were at a disadvantage in many ways, but mostly because they had negotiated a bad deal for themselves and they wanted to change it, but BC did not. The overriding issue

was to manage the rising anti-Japanese sentiment and dangerously negative public opinion across Canada, as the case developed and went to trial. (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, April 9, 2005)

In yet another international situation, late on a Friday afternoon in 2002, on just a moment's notice, Lukaszewski went to Belgium for a client. The meeting couldn't be held in Paris because there was an outstanding arrest warrant for the client's CEO in France. Lukaszewski went to help company leadership prepare to deal with serious ethical and legal problems caused by a group of rogue employees in a nearby country.

Failing to resolve the situation, literally within 72 hours, could result in serious governmental and legal problems, including the arrest and detention of senior company officials in seven other European countries. Working 24/7 with a team of company communicators and leaders, within that 72 hours window, a Code of Conduct was drafted, a compliance program was constructed and an employee handbook was made ready for production and distribution. Then, a global installation plan for these processes was outlined for others to execute. (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, April 9, 2005)

Lukaszewski is known for his willingness to share his insights about the changing PR profession, all for the betterment of the individual and for the sake of the profession.

### For the Sake of the Profession

Lukaszewski may be a private person who keeps his client list confidential, but he is eager to teach all that he knows. His company's Web site, [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com), is packed full of information, tips and strategies on crisis communication - one visitor to the site said "it's like attending the graduate school of PR" (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d., para. 6).

In fact, in a personal interview (April 6, 2005), Lukaszewski remarked that he receives feedback daily from visitors to his website:

"Fantastic Web site which I recommend to my final year PR students. Especially enjoyed relevance of strategy articles. Thank you!"

"I took a crisis communication management seminar from Jim ... at NYU - it was fantastic! One of my clients ... wants a list of the industry's

top crisis communications experts; I'm putting Jim at the top."

[From Australia] You truly are a guru on best practice of communications, especially crisis communications. I have avidly followed your articles and Web seminars for years. I am rereading my set of your crisis communications handbooks (2000 Edition) that I purchased while a corporate practitioner and my boss was nice enough to let me keep them for my reference. Thanks so much for generously sharing your insights with your fellow PR professionals!

And, finally:

I am very impressed with your Web site and contributions to the PR field. As :MD of PR Academy in Singapore, I am looking into various training programs to enhance the standards of our communicators, especially in the public sector.

Lukaszewski is a sought-after conference speaker, lecturer and teacher. When he isn't with a client, he is traveling the country sharing his knowledge through seminars, speeches and articles. He was an adjunct associate professor of management and communications in the Marketing and Management Institute at New York University's School of Continuing and Professional Studies for 15 years and is a guest lecturer at Columbia University (The Lukaszewski Group, n.d.).

Judy Voss, director of Professional Development for the Public Relations Society of America, said Lukaszewski is dedicated to the organization and very generous with his time. "Jim's seminars consistently get high ratings. He is very good at reaching out to other industry experts to bring their expertise to PRSA. He conducted a litigation seminar that expanded our knowledge of the law and how it relates to PR" (personal communication, March 23, 2005).

Voss said the public relations industry has been greatly influenced by Lukaszewski's teachings on crisis management. "He is an expert at getting people out of trouble and keeping them out of trouble. He has saved people from many problems by knowing how to, when to and whether to respond" (personal communication, March 23, 2005).

Former colleague Mary Ann N. Cotton, taking a career break to be home with her young children, said when it is time to re-enter the PR world, she won't hesitate to call the person who taught her what she knows.

Not many people know this, but part of Jim's goal is to service the profession. He wanted me to be the best, for me. He is particular about who he hires and works with. He teaches them and brings them along, just to further the profession. He spends just as much time teaching as he does with his clients - that really separates him from others in the profession and puts him at the front of the pack. (personal communication, February 20, 2005)

Karen Muldoon Geus is just one of Lukaszewski's former clients who was greatly impacted by his teaching. Geus, vice president of public relations, communications and marketing for The Children's Hospital of Pruladelphia, first met Lukaszewski in 1995 at a crisis management conference in New York.

I was working through challenges in my telecommunications company at the time. I was riveted by what Jim had to say; his message was clear and made sense. He helped me think strategically to work through the problem. He jumps in, rolls up his sleeves and is all about getting the job done. If he thinks you're off point, he'll tell you. He challenges you. (personal communication, March 8, 2005)

Gens said she now looks to Lukaszewski to help prepare physicians and scientists at the hospital who testify before Congress on health issues and are interviewed on national news programs like *Dateline NBC* and *60 Minutes*.

Gues gets what she calls a "gold nugget" each time she talks with Lukaszewski. "I have a list of these gold nuggets or pointers from Jim that I keep taped on my computer. What it says embodies Jim" (personal communication, March 8, 2005). The list reads: be helpful, be positive, do what's really important, finish things, focus on tomorrow, make positive incremental progress every day, move beyond what everybody knows, teach others and wage peace every day.

James Lukaszewski credits Barbara - his wife, publisher, editor and mother of their children - as the main reason he accomplishes anything. She points to several other things, like his endless appetite for information. She said her husband reads about eight books a month, several newspaper& every day, dozens of magazines each month, and watches a number of television shows all at the same time. But she said he also has unique characteristics that still amaze her after 42 years:

I constantly marvel at his curiosity and awareness of patterns in the world around him, which he

develops into success steps in dealing with angry publics, or for getting to the table, or for whatever other brilliances come into his mind. As I describe it, he puts two-plus-two together and gets seven, or nine, or ten - and his seven, nine or ten is the correct answer for the situation at hand. You listen to it, and you know it's right and you know that it's brilliant strategy. Jim is an empiricist and a watcher. He notices patterns and behaviors in the world around him, and then generalizes them to develop action steps to enhance, explain, contain, counteract or strategize. He's a thinker with so very much to share. (personal communication, March 15, 2005)

For a man who has so much to share, some of his greatest advice to PR practitioners is about the pragmatic use of language - about how to say less.

"Say less - but make it more important: write less - but make it crucially important" (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, February 13, 2005). Lukaszewski believes that the communication problems his clients face can only be resolved through superior personal leadership skills combined with positive strategic, ethical communication.

The reason I do what I do is simple. I want to have an important, constructive impact on the lives of people and organizations I help. I intend to change their lives, for their benefit, in some productive way through our interaction. My intention is also to change the way public relations is practiced in America. My ultimate goal in working with other **PR** professionals or staff members is to help them learn to have happier, successful and more important and influential professional lives. Fundamentally, I am a teacher, mostly of ethical behavior. Following what I teach and coach enables my clients, colleagues and students to build a legacy they and their organizations and the people they care about can be proud of. (J. Lukaszewski, personal communication, March 31, 2005)

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#### About the Author

Dottie Barnes spent 20 years in broadcast journalism as a television news reporter, anchor and producer in Michigan. She also produced and hosted her own radio talk show for three years. Barnes earned her Bachelor of Applied Arts degree from Central Michigan University where she was chosen by faculty as a top broadcaster in 1981. She was also inducted into and voted president of the honor society, Mortar Board. Barnes earned her Master of Science in Communication from Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan, where she is a communications specialist and an adjunct professor of journalism.

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