



# The Lukaszewski Group

*Helping Leaders and Their Organizations  
Prepare For, Respond To and Recover From Crisis*

FILE: Management Communication

TO: Executive Addressed

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Chairman

RE: The Executive Decision Model: The Three Minute Drill

One crucial reality of being a trusted advisor is that the best and most useful advice is often needed in a brief period of time (on-the-spot) under the pressure of events. The Three Minute Drill is a compact, direct process for giving those you help focused, accurate, and complete information – framed in a strategic way – from which to choose a course of action.

The discipline is to use this highly focused, structured, time-sensitive approach to get your recommendations promptly put forward. This allows the balance of discussion time, meeting time, or face time with those you advise to be productive and directed toward helping them make better decisions. The six elements of the process are described below.

**Step 1: Situation description (60 words):** Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation. This is the factual basis for “what we know now,” “why we need to take your time, now, to discuss this,” or “This is a new and important topic we need to talk about, now.”

**Step 2. Analysis (60 words):** Briefly describe what the situation means, its implications, and perhaps, how it threatens or presents opportunities. Include one or two key assumptions that validate the analysis. Managers always need to know why, but not in great detail. They’re also interested in the intelligence you’ve gathered or know about that supports your analysis, assumptions, and recommendations.

**Step 3: The goal (60 words):** The clear, concise statement of the task to be accomplished. Goals keep everyone focused forward. The goal should be stated as the behavioral, emotional, or intellectual change in your target constituencies. Useful goals are understandable, brief, achievable, positive, and time/deadline sensitive.

**Step 4. Options (150 words):** Always present at least three options for action. You can suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from. The goals you suggest are to “do something,” “do something more,” or “do nothing.” Having multiple options keeps you at the table and avoids the “death by question” syndrome that often strikes should you have only one recommendation. Lose that single recommendation through a crucial unanticipated question, and you’ll be out of the discussion for the duration.

**Step 5. Recommendation (60 words):** Be prepared to say what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes, and why. The recommendation is usually selected on the basis of which option will cause the least number of negative unintended consequences. This is where you earn your paycheck and a place at the table. The boss always wants to know what you would do if you were in his/her shoes. Be prepared to walk through a similar sort of analysis for each of the options proposed.

**Step 6. Justification (60 words):** Identify the negative unintended – but fully predictable – consequences of each option, including the option to do nothing. These are the reactions or circumstances that could arise resulting from the options you suggest (including to do nothing). Every management decision or action has consequences that can be forecast. Each also has unintended consequences that can also be forecast. Inadequate provision for consequences is what can sabotage an otherwise useful strategy.

Striving to provide advice in this 450-word format (three minutes) is powerful, conserves management time, and coupled with the discipline of suggesting three action options every time, will get you invited back to the table again and again.