



Working With Print And Broadcast Media During A Crisis

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Fundamentals

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Crisis Defined

crisis / 'kraisis / n.

Any adversity that severely disrupts business
and causes damage to brand equity,
reputation and the bottom line.

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Crises Do Happen

“In today’s world, it is not a question of if
or whether an organization will experience
a crisis; it is only a matter of what type of
crisis will occur, what form it will take, and
how and when it will happen.”

Dr. Ian I. Mitroff
University of Southern California

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The Wrong Approach



“Okay, people, the question is should we deny first and then delay, or delay first and then deny?”

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Role Of The Mass Media

- Interprets facts for audience (information source)
- Reports existing information (alerts audience)
- Influences issue portrayal (educates audience)
- Highlights or restricts information (gatekeeper)
- Proposes solutions (advocacy)

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How The Mass Media Work

- Event focused & looking for drama
- Controversy oriented (villain & victim)
- Seeks balance & opposing views
- Condenses & simplifies
- Personalizes & sensationalizes
- Deadline driven & competitive
- Independent & profit oriented

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Journalists Need Your Help

- They often have limited background information regarding your company
- They often have limited scientific and technical knowledge and experience
- They often have limited access to important crisis and risk related information
- They usually want to be accurate and therefore appreciate fact sheets and other relevant information

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Media Attention

Effectively working with print, broadcast and social media is an important crisis response factor because heightened media scrutiny and unfavorable coverage may translate into lasting reputational and bottom line damage.

How your organization responds to media attention in times of crisis may determine the difference between success and failure.

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Media Statement

1. *What* happened / is still happening?
2. *When* did it happen? (Is it still happening?)
3. *Where* did it / is it happen(ing)?
4. *Who* was / is / will be affected?
5. *Why* did it / is it happen(ing)?
6. *What* danger did / does / will it pose?
7. *What* was / is / will be done about it?
8. *When* will future updates happen?

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Why Media Interviews?

Every media interview and news conference presents a valuable opportunity to convey prepared messages to specific audiences using the reporter or blogger as the filter.



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Practice Makes Perfect

Media interview success is first and foremost the result of effective preparation and repeated practice. Those who don't sufficiently prepare and practice all too often end up regretting it.

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Message Development

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Interview Preparation

- Identify and monitor affected stakeholders and determine their information needs (ongoing task)
- Determine what you want to accomplish with the interview (Business & Communication Objectives)
- Prepare to provide timely, truthful, consistent and coordinated information (One-Voice Policy)

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Key Messages

- Develop (3) key messages that will enable you to accomplish your interview goals
- Identify relevant examples and comparisons that support your key messages
- Identify confidential information and decide how to respond to requests for such information

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Messaging* Rules

- Get ready to say what you know (facts)
- Get ready to say how you feel about it (feelings)
- Get ready to say what you will do about it (actions)

* Messaging = Message Development & Message Delivery

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Messaging Rules

- Messages Must Be True (honesty)
- Messages Must Sound True to Speaker (credible spokesperson)
- Messages Must Sound True to Audience (stakeholders)

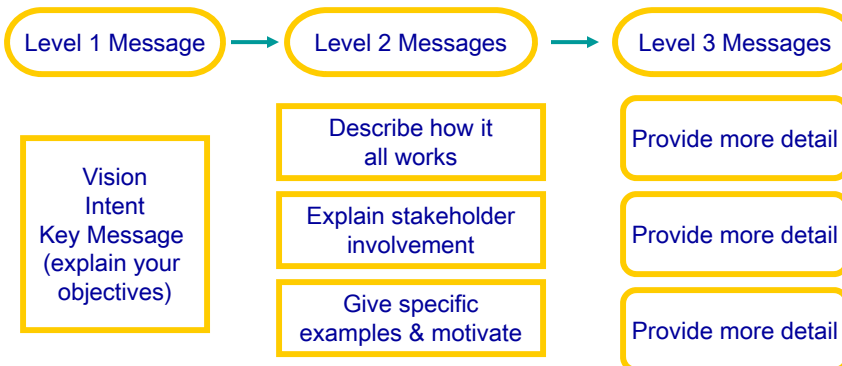
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Message Development: Three Level Method



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Three Level Method: Example

- Level 1 Message: “Your drinking water is safe.”
- Level 2 Message: “We are confident in the safety of your drinking water because we test it thoroughly each day using proven methods along with independent verification by the Department of Health, outside experts, and local residents.”
- Level 3 Message: “Water testing standards are derived from the National Water Quality Protocols manual. Samples are taken simultaneously at a dozen different sites around the city. We take every possible precaution to ensure all testing protocols are followed. Water testing results are shipped to three separate lab locations. A site is deemed safe if all three labs verify that the sample is within standards.”

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Developing & Delivering Technical Risk Messages

- Don't Assume Prior Knowledge
- Prepare & Provide Background Information
- Explain Safety Mechanisms & Procedures
- Be Up-Front About Uncertainty
- Address Low-Probability, High- Consequence Scenarios

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Developing & Delivering Technical Risk Messages

- Explain Unfamiliar Terms & Measurements
- Use Risk Comparisons with Caution
- Utilize Effective Visuals
- Avoid Jargon & Alphabet Soup
- Never Patronize or Insult Your Stakeholders' Intelligence

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Message Delivery

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Keep In Mind

- 5 Second Rule (TV & Radio)
- Concise, Memorable & Quotable
- Newsworthy “Sound Bites”
- Express Empathy (“We care!”)
- Stick to Your Key Message(s)
- Align Your Non-Verbal with Your Verbal Communication (see next slide)

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Avoid Disconnects



“We welcome questions concerning our business practices. It is our policy to always communicate in an open, timely and friendly manner.”



Always align your non-verbal with your verbal communication!

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Bridging

- Bridging (also called Transitioning) enables the interviewee to move from an unwanted question to a key message
- Successfully employing the Bridging Technique requires repeated practice
- A good first step is memorizing so-called conjunctive words or phrases

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Conjunctive Words

- And
- But
- Therefore
- Let me put it this way
- In fact
- In other words

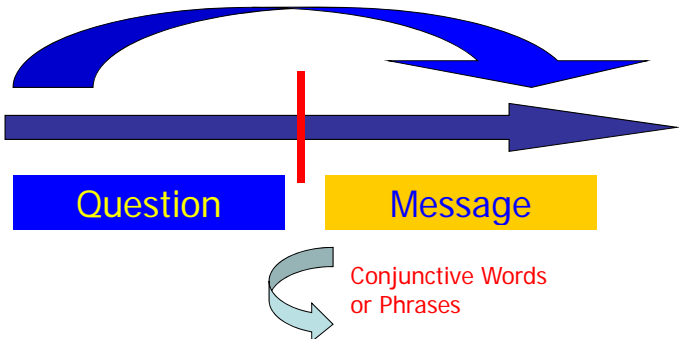
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Bridging Visualized




Question Message

Conjunctive Words
or Phrases

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Bridging Example

- Question:
Is it true that management is hiding crucial information regarding the incident?
- Answer:
Absolutely not. In fact, we have been...

Emphatic "NO" Bridging to Key Message

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Hooking

- Hooking is a technique that gets the reporter to follow-up on your first point allowing you to address a second point / deliver a second message
- The audience will regard the interview as incomplete if the reporter does not follow-up regarding the second point
- Deliver the more important message first in case the reporter does unexpectedly not follow-up on the second point

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Hooking Example

- Question:
Why was your company not able to prevent this incident?
- Answer:
“There are two things I want to mention in regard to your question. First, we take safety very seriously... Second, ...”

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Flagging

- Flagging means alerting your audience to what you regard as most important
- Your choice of words, intonation, volume, and non-verbal signals emphasize the importance of a given message
- Many people use this technique unconsciously on a day-to-day basis, but deliberately employing it during a media interview can be difficult

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Flagging Example

- Question:
What are you going to do to ensure this does not happen again?
- Answer:
“The critical point is we are conducting a thorough...
“What I want everyone to know is that we regard the health of our employees and the community...

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What TV Viewers Remember

- Verbal > 7%
- Vocal > 38%
- Visual > 55%



Dr. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA

How you look and sound on TV and radio is
often more important than what you say!



Reporters' Tactics

Reporter states incorrect information

- Never repeat incorrect information
- Say that the information is incorrect
- Provide correct information, if possible
- Bridge to your message(s)



Reporters' Tactics

Reporter asks question you don't understand

- Refrain from answering if you didn't understand
- Instead ask reporter to restate question or
- Ask reporter to clarify question further
- Don't forget to bridge to your message(s)

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Reporters' Tactics

Reporter presses for proprietary information

- Refrain from providing the information
- Explain that the information is proprietary
- Consider offering other newsworthy information
- Bridge to your message(s)

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Interview Success

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Interview Dos

- Always Anticipate Reporter Questions
- Always Develop Key Messages
- Always Stick to Facts and Messages
- Always Stay Calm and Collected
- Always Correct the Record

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Interview Don'ts

- Don't Use "Fancy" Language
- Don't Attack Critics, only the Issues
- Don't Use Absolutes
- Don't Ever Lie
- Don't Overuse Humor

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Interview Success

- You Are Never "Off The Record"
- Stay away from Personal Opinions
- Never Repeat Incorrect Information
- Never Speculate
- Never Say "No Comment"

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Thank You

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