PR Play 5-1
Rules Followed By The Best Writers

Those who use effective communication techniques will stress these *20 Rules for Good Writing* from the Writers Digest School:

1. Prefer the plain word to the fancy.
2. Prefer the familiar word to the unfamiliar.
3. Prefer the Saxon (more simple) word to the Roman (Latin derivation).
4. Prefer nouns and verbs to adjectives and adverbs.
5. Prefer picture nouns and action verbs.
6. Never use a long word when a short one will do as well.
7. Master the simple declarative sentence.
8. Prefer the simple sentence to the complicated.
9. Vary your sentence length.
10. Put the words you want to emphasize at the beginning or end of your sentence.
11. Use the active voice.
12. Put statements in a positive form.
13. Use short paragraphs.
14. Cut needless words, sentences and paragraphs.
15. Use plain, conversational language. Write like you talk.
16. Avoid imitation. Write in your natural style.
17. Write clearly.
18. Avoid gobbledygook and jargon.
19. Write to be understood, not to impress.
20. Revise and rewrite. Improvement is always possible.

Observers believe Sabol's advice is the success behind NFL Films®. The bottom line: outstanding strategic writers fully understand and pay attention to writing's fundamentals – persuasive and otherwise.

The 30-3-30 Principle

Copy should be prepared using the 30-3-30 principle. Is your copy aimed at the 30-second reader, the three-minute reader or the 30-minute reader? To be effective, write for all three audiences.

In simple terms, the 30-second reader relies on headlines or "blurbs" (pull quotes) to get their information. The three-minute reader is looking for the five W's (who, what, when, where and why) right off the top or

PR Play 5-2

*Helpful Hints for Broadcast Writing**

1. Write simple spoken English.
2. Never use a long word when a short one will do.
3. Try to keep one thought to a sentence.
4. Vary sentence length.
5. Use verbs. Do not drop verbs. Listeners need verbs.
6. Use picture nouns and action verbs.
7. Use the active voice.
8. Try to use the present or the present perfect tense.
9. Avoid using "today." Try to give *your* news story or release the most up-to-date peg you can.
10. Do **NOT** use synonyms – avoid synonyms. Synonyms can confuse the listener.
11. Do **NOT** use pronouns. Repeat proper names.
12. Avoid direct quotes – paraphrase (it's safer).
13. Always find a way of repeating location. Repeating the location toward the bottom of the story (or throughout video news release) is important to the listener or viewer.
14. Keep adjectives to a minimum. Adjectives tend to clutter speech and obscure the main line of the story.
15. Don't use appositions. (A construction in which a noun or noun phrase is placed with another as an explanatory equivalent – example: Litwin, the public relations specialist, was born in Philadelphia.) Please **DO NOT** use appositions. Most appositions are not natural to speech. Appositions often confuse the listener because he/she cannot see the necessary punctuation.
16. Use simple sentences. This would usually mean not starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase or a participle phrase.
17. Attribution. Almost always comes at the beginning of sentence…**NOT** at the end. (Example: Use – Company spokesperson Daniel O'Neill pointed out that this year's contributions will be the biggest ever. **Don't use** – "This year's contribution will be the biggest ever," said Daniel O'Neill, company spokesperson.
18. Place yourself in a story or two. If you are writing the newscast (or release) for air in Philadelphia and the story is about a college in Philadelphia, say…*Here in* Philadelphia.
19. When you write a broadcast release or a news story this way it must follow that it be delivered naturally – but with authority – and if delivered naturally, it means proper names may not always be emphasized – often the verb is emphasized – *natural* inflection.

*Portions adapted from "Writing - here at ABC"

CHAPTER 9

Media Relations – and – The Impact of Public Relations (Strategic Communication) on the News

The very first step toward becoming successful in dealing with the media is the ability to recognize *hard* news and understand the difference between *hard* news and features.

Hard news is something of interest to a segment (or fragment) of the public. It is (more) immediate. For the most part, it is timely and has a local "hook." It probably becomes outdated quickly unless it is updated. A more formal definition calls for *hard* news to be truly newsworthy, presented factually and objectively. Many times, it is breaking news.

Feature (or *soft*) news, on the other hand, covers many categories that don't fall under *hard* news – human-interest stories, personality pieces, etc. Feature stories are less timely and don't have the immediacy that hard news does. In many cases, they are "evergreens."

Hard news can often be controlled. (Announcing a major breakthrough, appointment or resignation.) This type of information can be announced through a news release or news conference. Other *hard* news events might be beyond your control – an employee walkout, a shooting, an industrial accident or the unexpected death of a key employee.

When unexpected news breaks, time may not permit preparing a news release. However, you can call the media (if possible, before they call you) and give them the full story (or as much as you have that can be on the record). Good reporters usually find out anyway, especially if the news is bad, and you will gain some powerful friends because *you* contacted *them* with the information. With the pressures of 24/7 news, it is more important than ever to be proactive.

As for features, many times you won't even have to write them. Just pitch the story ideas to reporters, who in turn will "sell" them to their editors (gatekeepers) – and voila' – they do the work for you.

On the subject of news releases – they should never be hit or miss. News releases and, depending on the event, media kits, should be part of an over-all communications program (see pros and cons of media kits in Chapter 5).

Never forget this simple "unwritten" rule: reporters like to talk to people who make news. They look for name recognition – whether in print, online or broadcast. Your job as a public relations practitioner is to make that person available and your responsibility as strategic adviser is to make certain that the newsmaker is prepared for the interview.

Recognizing Hard News

It has already been established that *hard* news is any event that affects or is of interest to a reasonable number of people. News is about change and how those changes are tracked and documented. Reporters – whether seasoned or rookies – will tell you, news is the search for truth. According to veteran editor and college professor Everett Landers, "Journalists rely on public relations and/or media spokespeople to provide facts and other information because writing from ignorance is the highest unethical act in journalism.

"People act on information that isn't true. Newspapers, especially, have an obligation to filter."

When deciding whether you have a newsworthy item, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is the item of consequence to a reasonable number of readers, listeners or viewers?
2. Will the readers be interested in reading it?
3. Does it have impact?
4. Is it timely?

An important event that occurs today or tonight must be reported in tomorrow's papers (or it might even find its way almost immediately onto the newspaper's website or a TV or radio station website). Missing the deadline for the next day's paper may cause editors to reject an otherwise good story. If something happens today, or is about to happen, prepare a news release or media advisory, sometimes called "an invita-

tion to cover" (Chapter 5 – Basic Strategic [Persuasive] Writing) that could be emailed, faxed or "snail" (regular) mailed. Never play favorites with reporters. (Well, almost never.) [You might have to "use" a reporter for your benefit.]

Is your story local in nature – in other words, does it have a "hook" and does it relate to what people might have on their minds?

The local media thrive on news that originates within their circulation, listening or viewer areas. Try to emphasize the localness of the story by name-dropping.

No matter with what organization you are associated, developing good media relations is imperative. Failure to get along with the media can result in bad press even when conditions don't warrant it. It is a no-win situation for you if you decide the media are your adversaries. A "rule" to live by: "Never argue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel and paper by the ton."

Knowing how to communicate is essential. If reporters are regarded as intruders, they will react accordingly. If, however, you treat them with trust and consideration, their attitude will be positive and friendly, but still businesslike. View reporters as partners in the distribution of your organization's news, not as adversaries.

PR Play 9-1

Reporters like to talk to people who make news. It is your job to make that person available and your responsibility to make certain that newsmaker is prepared for the interview.

Treat Newsmen and Newswomen as You Would Want Them to Treat You!

Get to know reporters on a first-name basis. Results support the finding that a reporter on friendly terms with a source will make every effort to be fair to that source when controversial news develops.

However, even the most effective media relations programs won't always escape the wrath of the media. If you are criticized, don't jeopardize a longstanding relationship by "jumping" on the reporter. Rather, schedule an informal meeting, over coffee or lunch, and discuss the

issue(s). If nothing else, you will ascertain whether or not the reporter and/or his outlet have an agenda.

Some Things You Ought To Know

Right or wrong, the media consider themselves watchdogs. The majority of reporters are not interested in sensationalizing the news. Essentially, they report controversy because they believe it to be in the public interest and because that is what their editors assign.

Reporters are charged by their editors to cover the news accurately and fairly. However, some reporters might enter into combat with an inherent bias – which leads to agenda setting.

Unfortunately, unless you are in a metropolitan area, staffs are small with few "beat" systems. All that adds up to the public relations practitioner dealing with different reporters whenever a story breaks – supplying the same background information time and time again. It can get frustrating. But remember, as the media relations contact, you are there to serve – to help assure that the reporter gets a factual story. The reporter is your first step toward getting your story to the target audience. The reporter – and newspaper – are intermediary audiences (message carriers).

As a media relations contact, you must remember – print is a space medium; television and radio are time media.

PR Play 9-2

"Never argue with anyone who buys ink by the barrel and paper by the ton."

Everett Landers – Former managing editor (Gannett) – News Coach and Professor – Temple (Pa.) University and Rowan (N.J.) University

Establish a Policy

Every organization, small and large, should have a media relations policy. It should underscore its commitment to be truthful and to give facts accurately when dealing with the media. The policy should also include a commitment to admit problems and mistakes when asked about them and to explain what is being done to solve them. The act of accepting responsibility when necessary must be included in any media policy. (Examples:

Positive – Johnson & Johnson®, which pulled all Tylenol® products from store shelves following product tampering [1982] blamed for seven deaths on Chicago's West Side; Negative – Ford® and Firestone®, which blamed each other for hundreds of deaths and injuries [2000] attributed to crashes involving Ford Explorers® and Firestone® tires; and Pennsylvania State University [2012], which was slow in reacting to the Jerry Sandusky child-abuse scandal (see Chapter 14). An example of mutual respect between a spokesperson and the media would be Connecticut State Police Lt. Paul Vance reacting to the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in December 2012 (see Chapter 14).

Every person responsible for dealing with the media – in fact, every PR practitioner, strategic adviser and counselor – should have an understanding of how each vehicle or communication channel (newspapers, magazines, radio and TV news and the Web – podcasts, videocasts and blogs) works and the role it plays in the *convergence of distribution* (media convergence) and other *cross platforming* techniques (Chapter 10). When crafting a *media relations policy,* don't be afraid to discuss its contents with media representatives – editors, news directors, reporters, editorial writers, etc. Their involvement and recommendations add credibility and understanding to the policy because they partnered in drafting it.

What Editors and Reporters Expect of PR Practitioners

Editors and reporters embrace the concept of *relationship (management) marketing* when dealing with an organization's spokesperson or media relations contact.

Because of downsizing in print media, both in personnel and editorial copy space – known as the news hole – less space (fewer column inches) is being allocated for editorial copy. (However, as hard copy space decreases, Web content increases.)

On the flip side, TV has been increasing its news programming and providing more opportunities for features to fill time. Years ago, local stations carried only 6 and 11 p.m. (10 p.m. in some markets) newscasts. Today, it is common for local affiliates to carry early morning, midday (noon or earlier) and 4, 4:30, 5, 5:30 and 6 p.m. "shows" or a combination of late afternoon or early evening broadcasts. And, almost all affiliates and many independent TV stations and cable operators run 10 or 11 p.m. newscasts.

For public relations, staff cutbacks in print and broader programming on the television side translate into many more opportunities for organized and savvy strategic advisers to become "content providers" through well-written news releases and/or by providing professionally-produced video.

In all media, thanks to increased deadline pressures, reporters have come to rely on an organization's communication staff more than ever. In summary, these are the top criteria editors, news directors and reporters expect of PR practitioners and other strategic communicators:

- Relationships
- Know what news is
- Deadline awareness
- Accuracy
- Timeliness
- A climate of trust/honesty
- Understanding media limitations
- Accessibility (especially when bad news hits)

Making the "Pitch"

There are numerous opportunities to get stories into newspapers and on radio and TV using the news release as the foundation for a reporter's story. When presenting – "pitching" – your story to a reporter or editor:

- Use few words with a hook.
- Work in an action verb or two.
- Hot topics are best.
- Target it.
- Drop a familiar name or two.
- Ask yourself: Does my story have impact? (Reporters do not get paid for under-reported information.)
- Get to the point quickly – but don't forget the angle.
- Personalize it, if possible.
- Don't be afraid to offer facts in support of your "pitch" and story.
- If sent electronically, ask for receipt confirmation in lieu of follow-up call.

As in baseball, some "media pitchers" are better than others. But, when it comes to "media pitching," everyone can learn – because unlike baseball, strategic communicators don't "pitch" curves. All "pitches" are straight – although they do need a "hook." While that might sound contradictory, the bottom line is – "pitches" must be open, honest, thorough and valid (relevant).

PR Play 9-3
Preparing the "Pitch"

The "pitcher's" preparation should include more than just a familiarity with local news outlets.

- Read, read, read.
- Watch, watch, watch.
- Listen, listen, listen.
- Get story ideas *from* the media.
- Think trend pieces.
- Research who you are pitching.
- Create targeted media lists.
- Know the publication or news outlet before making the contact.
- Know which reporter to contact (rather than just a "cold call").
- Have all the facts at your fingertips.
- Craft a sample "pitch" or elevator speech (30 seconds maximum) before making the call.
- Practice your "pitch" before making the call.

It never hurts to think outside the box. As you do, ask yourself, "If I were a reporter, would *I* be interested?" Believe in your "pitch." Understand and know your client, product or service as well as you know your own name. You must convince yourself before you try to persuade others – a major step in your becoming a "content provider."

Practice being smooth and comfortable on the phone. Research an outlet's deadlines. websites and other electronic outlets – many 24/7 news providers – have a deadline a minute. No matter which newsroom you call, always ask, "Is this is a good time?" If not, ask *when*. Be persistent, but not rude. Everyone has a different "pitching" style. Find the one that works for you and be consistent.

Here are more suggestions to help you get coverage for your phone "pitch":

- Identify yourself and who you represent.
- Ask about timing. Is reporter on deadline?
- Once you get the positive response you are looking for – start "pitching."
- At *that* moment "hit" the send button on your computer to re-mail your news release so that the reporter has it (again) at the top of his/her mails and won't have to search for it.
- Your "pitch" should be 30 seconds – maybe a bit longer.
- If you are interrupted with questions – it's a good sign.

cont.

PR Play 9-3 continued

Don't get discouraged if you are rejected. In fact, learn from rejection. Hitters in baseball are considered successful if their average is .300 or better. Media relations "pitchers" should consider themselves "winners" if 30 percent or more of their story ideas make it into print or on the air.

PR Play 9-4
A Checklist "Newsworthy Story Angles"

WHO

- **Celebrity**
  – Are famous people involved?
- **Human Interest**
  – Does it have a man or woman in the face of adversity?
  – Does someone have an unusual job?
  – Is it someone who makes a good story?

WHAT

- **Adventure**
  – Is there an adventure, experiment, exploration or voyage?
- **Hot News**
  – Does it relate to a hot news item?
- **Bleeds and Leads**
  – Does it involve hate, tragedy, love, sex, children or animals?
- **Mystery**
  – Does the mystery have suspense?
  – Will they find an answer?
  – Will they find a cure?
  – Will the community/world survive the onslaught (power shortage or water)?
- **New**
  – Is it new?
- **Novel**
  – Is it unusual, novel, peculiar, humorous, different or odd?
  – Is it the biggest, smallest, nicest, meanest, strangest or happiest?

cont.

PR Play 9-4 continued

- **Unknown**
  – Is it little known but interesting (desolate beach, unusual service/store/product/restaurant, etc.)?

WHEN

- **Timely**
  – Is it timely?

WHERE

- **Proximity**
  – Is it local?

WHY

- **Importance/Impact**
  – Is it important to a large number of people?
  – Is it important to a small number of people?
- **Consequence, Conflict, Controversy**
  – Does it have consequence, conflict or controversy?
- **Future**
  – Is it going to change the future?
  – Will it help you earn more money or live a longer/healthier life?

PR101: Media Relations and M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

The "pitcher" has to intrigue the reporter or editor enough to pique his/her interest in the story. The reporter wants to hear why the story might be relevant to the news outlet's readers, listeners or viewers.

Use words and examples that paint pictures to bolster your "pitch." It's called "scene setting." Once the reporter or gatekeeper "buys" into your story, he/she still has to sell it to an editor at an editorial planning meeting also called an *editorial content, log* or *budgeting* meeting. Print (space) media rely on such meetings to plan their pages while broadcast (time) media rely on them to lay out their shows.

Meeting participants traditionally include editors or news directors, news planners and assignment editors. There are times when beat reporters and general assignment reporters might attend to "pitch" their own stories, which might include those "pitched" to them. News planners are critical to the space and time devoted to a story and, in fact, help reporters justi-

fy covering stories. News planners maintain the news files and work with assignment editors to set up stories a day or two in advance.

Anatomy Of A Newspaper

While this entire book could be considered an "anatomy" of strategic communication, the next several paragraphs home in on the "anatomy" (structure) of a newspaper.

First and foremost, it must be accepted that newspapers are a business. Just ask the local group – Philadelphia Media Holdings, LLC (PMH) – who purchased *The Philadelphia Inquirer* for $562 million from The McClatchy Company, which spun it off from its Knight Ridder acquisitions. Less than nine months later, PMH announced major layoffs – nearly 20 percent of its editorial staff, plus dozens of others in sales and support positions.

Daily newspapers rely on more than just the paper that hits the street every day to contribute to the bottom line. They generate revenue online, with such sister publications as weeklies and guides, and special sections. Approximately 75 percent of a daily's revenue is from display and classified advertising – half of that is from classified (rather than display) automotive and real estate ads – and 25 percent is from circulation. Market penetration (circulation) of 50 percent of the homes in a market is considered good. With all of the news sources now available, more than 50 percent is considered very good.

On any given day, dailies are made up of the following sections:

- Section A – Main news with a 95 percent readership. The front page is also referred to as Page 1A.
- Section B – Local and metro news with strong readership – more than 50 percent. Page 1B is referred to as the second front page or split page.
- Sports (section C in many papers) – Readership averages 55 to 60 percent.
- Business – (section D in many papers) – Readership averages more than 50 percent thanks to increased number of features.
- Lifestyle/Home – (section E in many papers) Heavy on features – considered "soft" and "fuzzy" news by editors. Its readership is in the 40 to 50 percent range.
- Classifieds (section F in many papers).

- Other sections (especially on Sundays and "lettered" for quick reference) could include:
  – Automotive
  – Books
  – Arts & Entertainment
  – Health/Well Being
  – Jobs
  – Opinion
  – Neighbors (Zoned)
  – New Homes
  – Real Estate
  – Travel

Daily and weekly newspapers have transitioned to online. A strong online presence – for both print and broadcast media outlets – serves to establish the Internet as a strong advertising vehicle. Web versions of newspapers mirror print. For example, *The New York Times* on any given day has the following "jump to" (links) sections:

- Front Page
- International
- National Report
- Obituaries
- Editorials
- Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor
- The Metro Section
- Business Day
- Sports
- The Arts

Newspaper sectioning started as an advertising strategy – attracting certain readers – thus targeting audiences. Each has its own editor and staff – many eager to develop relationships with an organization's media relations representative. Staff is comprised mostly of general assignment reporters, but a number are considered beat reporters, meaning their area of coverage is specialized.

During the evolution of sectioning, editors discovered that readers enjoyed the ease of finding the news they wanted. Sections have their own front and back pages. Many of the section fronts – called *cover pages* – carry banner or strip ads across the page bottom (footer) and

occasionally across the top (header). Those section fronts carry *center packages* – a major (lead) story in the center also called the *centerpiece story*. *USA Today* commonly uses this technique.

Section back pages have become premier advertising space – often carrying dramatic full page ads. Sunday papers have the most sections and the largest circulation. News is in shortest supply for the Monday and Saturday editions.

A newspaper's corporate flow chart consists of its publisher, who serves as the chief executive officer (CEO). Other department heads include news, controller, advertising, circulation, production, human resources and marketing.

The news department is headed by an editor-in-chief or executive editor. Moving down the chart is the managing editor and news editor, who runs the desk – or slot, as it is known in some newsrooms. The section editors, who have the most impact on readers, report to the news editor. They include section A (front), city, sports, business, entertainment, lifestyle and travel. Many newspapers have weekend and special section editors. Special sections are usually run to generate revenue.

Instrument of Understanding

Newspapers view themselves as instruments of understanding – the muscle that drives journalism – even today with all of its editorial staff reductions.

Their first loyalty must be to their readers, listeners or viewers (now that print is cross platforming with blogs, podcasts, videocasts and tweets). To achieve that loyalty, reporters must never forget their job is to find the truth and report on it, according to Everett Landers, a news coach and former managing editor (Gannett).

That's where the strategic communicator/media relations specialist comes in – not only pitching stories important to his/her organization, but working with the enterprising reporter to help him/her report with *balance*, *accuracy*, *fairness* and *meaning* (keeping in mind what the reader will get out of the story). Said Landers: "Without meaning to the stories they carry, newspapers – as we know them today – cannot survive. To contribute to their quest for survival, *civic journalism* is now commonplace – stories about the critical issues on readers' minds; stories that reflect the community.

"The media relations specialist contributes to that *civic journalism* by working with reporters to develop a relationship and being able to explain why, what they are pitching is as it is and is news."

Strategic communicators must always keep in mind the newspaper's role in the community – mirroring life as it happens – reporting on stories and their reactions so that the people who read it learn about their neighbors, community, jobs and possible changes within their "section of town."

The *MAC Triad Plus* plays a vital part in placing a story. That's because the PR practitioner, who helps craft the strategic message and has chosen the newspaper as its channel, also targets the audience(s) (general and specialized), its geodemographics (where), demographics (who) and psychographics (personality, values, attitudes, interests, or lifestyles – also called IAO variables (Interests, Attitudes and Opinions).

Landers believed a strategic communicator's trust must be earned "always keeping in mind that knowledge is power and that knowledge and the knowledge of those you represent make *you* a valuable resource. The reputation and credibility of both the newspaper and the organization's strategic communicator must be first and foremost."

Landers and others recommend that the organization's media representative know his or her product as well as their own name, know the people behind it and the organization's philosophy, mission and vision.

According to Landers, "Newspapers often serve as *contrarians (skeptics)* – questioning whether the public receives what is promised. Ideally, ethical public relations, universally practiced, would eliminate the need for *contrarians*."

More than a century ago, newspaper (*Emporia* [Kansas] *Gazette*) editor and publisher William Allen White said, "A newspaper is an instrument of understanding – information that people want and need. Newspapers bring news to the people."

That concept holds true today. For newspapers to achieve that goal, said Landers, editors continually remind reporters that journalism's major purpose is to *inform*, *educate*, *inspire* and *entertain* – help readers make intelligent decisions. When pitching a story or reacting to a reporter's interview, a good practice would be for the PR practitioner to keep in mind the characteristics of a quality newspaper:

- It reflects values.
- It transmits culture.
- Its content is relavent.

With the rapid technological changes, Landers suggests that if television newscasts report the news, today's newspapers – in hardcopy and online – must define it. A well written news story is not unlike an "executive summary."

Understanding the difference between hard and soft news and the philosophies of William Allen White and Everett Landers are hardly enough for the public relations practitioner. The person responsible for media relations should also fully understand the make up of a traditional newspaper from the front page (1A) to that display ad on the back page of section E or whatever letter or title is on the final section. (Terms commonly used in newspaper newsrooms can be found beginning on page 290.)

Landers offers this advice to media specialists to help them better understand journalists and their outlets: "There has always been a special bond between the public and press. The average person has a preoccupation with the other person's trouble. It's called *human interest* and people react to *human interest*."

PR Play 9-5
Scheduling a News Conference

Scheduling of a news conference is dictated by the subject matter or its urgency. But when the luxury exists, think about selecting a "light" news day. For example, most public bodies, town councils or school boards regularly schedule their meetings for the first and third or second and fourth Mondays or Tuesdays in a month. Why not try to schedule your news conference or event for the "fifth" Monday or Tuesday in a month, for example? There are only a few such days in a year, and editors have available space the day after. It is a wonderful public relations tactic that doesn't take a great deal of strategic planning.

PR Play 9-6

News Conference or News Availability Checklist

Purdue University, Rowan University, reporters and others offer these suggestions to assure a successful news conference:

[ ] Reserve a room large enough to accommodate the expected number of media representatives and invited guests. The meeting area must contain electrical outlets and space for television crews.

[ ] Have tables, chairs, lectern, pencils and paper.

[ ] Arrange to have microphone and amplification.

[ ] Have water and glasses for speakers.

[ ] Arrange for parking.

[ ] Notify phone receptionists, security and others who might have to respond to calls or to media when they arrive.

[ ] Use banner, sign and/or logo behind the lectern and on the front of it.

[ ] Provide visuals for television.

[ ] Alert/remind the media by phone or email no later than the day before.

[ ] Invite public officials and VIPs who have an interest.

[ ] Brief participants about format and possible questions.

[ ] Post signs directing news media to the conference site.

[ ] Arrange to have someone meet the media.

[ ] Take notes and/or record for reporters unable to attend or for follow-up calls.

[ ] Be prepared to help get things going following the initial statement, by having someone ask the first question if no one else does.

[ ] Prepare a media kit (Chapter 5).

[ ] Make the media kit available on your website for media outlets who did not send representatives to the conference and for follow up.

cont.

PR Play 9-6 continued
Media Kit Contents

- Cover memo (list of media kit's contents)
- List of participants
- List of partnering or cooperating organizations
- Media Advisory/Media Alert/News and Photo Memo/Invitation to Cover (There is little difference. Choose one heading and stick with it for all of your media kits and media announcements.)
- News Releases
- Straight (hard stories)
- Features (soft stories)
- Biographies of speakers and key personnel
- Fact Sheets
- Backgrounder
  - Historical
  - Statistical
- Pictures and other graphics and visuals (suggested captions)
- Public Service Announcements (on CD or flash drive [USB])
- Position Paper(s)
- Op-Ed piece(s)
- Letter(s) to the Editor
- Texts of speeches
- Quote sheet
- Testimonials
- Fillers (newsy notes)
- Clip sheets (news clips)
- Logo repros or slicks – include on Flash (USB) drive, CD or DVD
- Collateral materials – Brochures/Publications
  - Annual reports
  - Magazines
  - Newsletters
  - Videos (DVD/Flash [USB] drive)
  - Free samples (if ethical)
  - Entire media kit should be duplicated on Flash (USB) drive, CD or DVD

With the advent of the Internet and other technology, the debate over media kits and their effectiveness has grown louder. Don't allow the cons to be a deterrent. Prepare a media kit for the Web just as you would for hard copy (Chapter 5). Those reporters interested in this resource would be encouraged to take advantage of it by downloading it from the website's "Newsroom." For those who attend the news conference, the media kit should contain a version on disk or Flash (USB) drive – known as electronic press kit (EPK) – as well as hard copies of such major components as news releases and fact sheets. For those organizations that really want to impress, think about distributing the kit on a low capacity, inexpensive "flash drive" that plugs into a computer's USB port.

The News Conference Compared to a News Availability

The news conference is an effective media relations' tool when properly used. It gives members of the media an equal opportunity to ask questions about a variety of topics or just the subject matter at hand.

While some organizations hold regular news conferences, it is more advisable to call them only when making major announcements, announcing important developments that need detailed explanations or to clear up a major controversy. Most times it is prearranged.

A news availability, on the other hand, is an opportunity to make someone available for questions from the media. It is less formal with no prepared statement – although the experienced strategic counselor has worked with that "someone" on key message points.

When scheduling a news conference, keep these suggestions in mind:
- Unless under pressure of time, give at least 24 hours notice.
- Let editors know why the news conference is being called.

PR Play 9-7
In-service For Reporters

A rarely used, but accepted and encouraged method among strategic communicators is the "in-service" for media members covering a long-term story or special event. A New Jersey school district that had lost nearly a dozen bond and budget referenda over several years determined that neither the public nor the media understood the issues. The public relations professional and school administrators invited media to a series of workshops spread out over several weeks. The workshops, over lunch (reporters do have to eat), lasted 45 minutes to an hour. Media outlets were encouraged to send any reporter who might cover the next referendum. A number of handouts – electronic and printed – were distributed and visuals were used freely. Attendance was excellent. The message was communicated to the reporters who in turn took it to the public in terms the audiences could understand. Those in-services – cutting edge at the time – were considered successful because the district went on a "winning streak" at the polls. (A number of media outlets were so impressed, they decided to run [side bar] stories on what they considered a unique approach.)

- Hand out a statement, background paper or fact sheet covering the main topic.
- Allow for a question period once the statement has been delivered.
- Don't allow the chief executive to handle the questioning alone. Staff members familiar with the topic should also be present.
- Anticipate questions and be sure the main participants have been fully briefed.
- If some of the questions stray, try to answer them. If they cannot be answered, be diplomatic. If not, reporters grow suspicious (skeptical) – it's their nature.
- End the conference as soon as interest lags. Be sure to thank the reporters for attending.

When and How to Complain

Errors are bound to occur – at least once in a while – no matter how hard you try to prevent them or the reporters try to avoid them. Remember, reporters and editors are under tremendous pressure. Never complain about minor errors. Save those complaints for the big mistakes.

If you must complain, get together with the reporter and discuss the error. There may have been a misunderstanding about a point or fact. There is even the possibility that the change was made by an editor without consulting the reporter.

If it is felt that a reporter slanted a story unfavorably, discuss the matter openly with him or her. The misunderstanding will probably be cleared up and a new improved long-standing relationship may be developed.

If errors occur frequently, or if the reporter continues to slant stories that might be embarrassing to your organization, discuss it (agenda setting) with the editor. But be prepared to document your argument with clippings, releases, fact sheets and other data.

If an editor gets the impression you are complaining without justification, he/she will probably instruct the reporter to step up his hard-hitting tactics. Never demand that an editor replace a reporter on your beat or fire him/her. Simply lay the facts on the table and let the editor decide how to handle the situation.

PR Play 9-8

Never hold a reporter responsible for an editorial stand his/her newspaper may have taken even if you believe the reporter had input in the action. Unfortunately, a paper has the right to take any stand it wishes and usually has an editorial board who establishes the opinion.

Some DOs When Dealing With Reporters

- Always be available to give information at any time.
- Give reporters your home or cell phone number and get his or hers – and also exchange email addresses. These numbers and addresses come in handy when unexpected news breaks during off-duty hours.
- Compliment a reporter when he or she has done an exceptionally fine job and on occasion, it doesn't hurt to drop a note or email to the editor.
- When a reporter isn't available to attend an event, a meeting or a speech, take notes and call immediately with the information.
- Be sure to let the media know if an event has been cancelled.
- When discussing news with reporters, always put facts in perspective and give as much background information as possible – but remember, you are always on the record.
- Always respond promptly to a reporter's question. If you don't have the information available or want time to think before answering, tell the reporter you will call back in a few minutes. *Then, make sure you do*.
- When giving a reporter an impromptu statement on the phone concerning a controversial issue, jot down or record your side of the conversation so you can recall what you said. The notations can also come in handy if another reporter calls about the same topic. It can also help if you are misquoted.
- According to the *Los Angeles Times*, it is acceptable to offer a reporter the opportunity to have him/her fact check and back check story content with you to make certain quotes and other facts are accurate.

Some DON'Ts When Dealing With Reporters

- Don't expect newspapers or other media to publish or air every word you write or say. Papers will rewrite your releases to conform to style and fit into limited space. Radio and TV stations will edit your material – many times taking a 10 or 15-minute interview and reducing it to a 25-second sound bite.

PR Play 9-9
On and Off the Record/For Background Only/Not for Attribution

Remember – when talking with reporters you are always on the record – even during informal or chance meetings. Avoid casual comments or "off the record" remarks unless you specify first that what you are about to say is not for publication or air. And be sure the reporter will accept "off the record" information before volunteering it. *Background* ("*on background"*) information is just that – for *background only* – not to be used and not to be attributed until such a time (if ever) that the *newsmaker* gives the go ahead. It is purely an act of educating a journalist about the subject without saying anything that can be used in a specific story until it is released. "Not for attribution" means that the information can be used, but the source may not be identified.

- Don't complain to an editor if a story isn't published or aired. If compelled to ask when a story will be published or aired, be diplomatic.
- Don't ever ask a reporter to see a story before it is published. (The very best and more secure reporters might go over strategic points in a story to assure the facts are correct [fact checking and back checking].)
- Don't ask reporters for clippings, tear sheets or recordings of stories after they appear or are aired. (If they practice good relationship marketing, they might just send them to you.) It is your responsibility to track *hits* and *impressions* (see pages 293 and 294). Set up online "alerts."
- Don't ask a newspaper to return a photo unless it is a very rare print – most are emailed, anyway.
- Don't try to suppress unfavorable news. Any attempt to do so usually ends up with the story receiving greater prominence.
- Don't tell a reporter how to write the story. If you want certain points emphasized, do that during the interview.
- Don't stress your title or position. Just be certain the reporter is given such information as corporate heads, key officers and "key" players.

Getting Coverage In Print and On The Air

Persuading the media to cover your business can be exasperating – both for you and for the journalists you approach. Contacting your local media with poorly researched story ideas is likely to result in no coverage and may even turn off reporters and editors who will consider future coverage.

"When business owners turn to the media, they think they can clobber them over the head with an idea and that the reporter should do it," says Greg Matusky, president of Gregory Communications, Inc., a

PR Play 9-10

Twenty-five Ways to *Deal* with the Media

- Make the CEO responsible for *media relations*.
- Face the facts.
- Consider the public interest in every operating decision.
- Respond quickly.
- Return calls.
- Know to whom you are talking.
- Be a source before you are a subject.
- If you want your views represented, you have to talk.
- Be prepared.
- Know your message.
- Put your story in context.
- Use everyday language.
- Don't speculate.
- Slow down.
- You are always on the record.
- Cage your lawyers.
- Tell the truth – or nothing.
- Be available.
- Don't expect to bat 1.000 (to be perfect).
- Be realistic.
- Don't take it personally.
- Control what you can.
- Know with whom you are dealing.
- Avoid TV unless you feel you can speak candidly.
- Be human.

Purdue University
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

media communications firm based in Ardmore, Pa. "Business owners must understand that good media coverage is like good sales – it starts with relationships."

Matusky and other communications professionals offer these tips for approaching the media:

- Get to know your local media. That means read, watch and listen to the news sources in your market.
- Understand that journalists have specific coverage areas – called beats. If you need help determining which reporter covers your business area, contact an assignment editor at the media outlet.
- Determine how you can help reporters do their job – such as supplying them with relevant statistics or relating what may be an emerging trend that you've noticed among your customers.
- Call the appropriate reporter with your story idea, and ask to schedule a telephone appointment.
- Expect to spend six to 12 months developing contacts in the media before you get results; and, remember, you are likely to see coverage only if a reporter considers your information to be a legitimate story angle.
- Be prepared for rejections.
- Tell the truth.

Check with your local chamber of commerce or other business groups to see if they offer media relations training seminars. Ideally, seminars include a panel of media representatives from your market.

Meg Whittemore – *Nation's Business/September, 1994*

Twenty-five Ways to *Deal* with the Media

- **Make the CEO responsible for media relations.** That means he/she must often speak for the corporation – routinely and in times of crisis – and must delegate enough authority to make the public relations spokesperson a credible source.
- **Face the facts.** If you screw up, admit it candidly. Avoid hedging or excuses. Apologize, promise not to do it again, and explain how you're going to make things right.
- **Consider the public interest in every operating decision.** Your reputation depends far more on what you do than on what you say. Act accordingly. Try giving your senior public relations expert a seat at the table when decisions are made.

- **Respond quickly.** You can't influence a story once its deadline has passed. Stalling can tarnish or destroy credibility. In a crisis, figure you have a day – at most – to get your story out.
- **Return calls.** Reporters are always writing on a deadline. Delays could mean that your side of the story may not be told.
- **Know to whom you are talking.** Ask the reporter who he or she represents and the nature of the story.
- **Be a source before you are a subject.** The time to make friends with reporters is long before trouble hits. Get to know the people who cover your company. Educate them. Help them with their stories and give them reason to respect you. Determine which journalists deserve your respect and trust.
- **If you want your views represented, you have to talk.** Reporters are paid to get stories, whether you help or not. When you clam up, they must depend on other sources – often people like that marketing VP you fired last month.
- **Be prepared.** Review the topic and have notes.
- **Know your message.** Predetermine your main points and stick to them.
- **Put your story in context.** Briefly provide any relevant background or anecdotes that explain the problem or situation.
- **Use everyday language.** Avoid jargon or specialized technical terms.
- **Don't speculate.** If you don't know an answer to a question, don't guess. Offer to get the answer later if you can, or refer the reporter to someone who can answer it. (Know the reporter's deadline.)
- **Slow down.** Speak clearly and concisely. Encourage questions for clarification.
- **You're always on the record.** There's no legal obligation for a reporter to keep anything off the record. Never say, "no comment."
- **Cage your lawyers.** They will (almost) always tell you to keep your mouth shut. But in many crisis situations your potential legal liability may be trivial compared with the risk of alienating your customers, employees or regulators.
- **Tell the truth – or nothing.** Nobody likes a liar.
- **Be available.** Offer to answer follow-up questions or help clarify problems that might develop as the story is being written and edited. (Editors and reporters list as a complaint, organizations' spokespeople not being available, especially when bad news breaks.)

- **Don't expect to bat (a perfect) 1.000.** Strategic communication is a game of averages, so be content if you win most of the time. Even the most flattering story will likely have a zinger or two, and even the best companies get creamed now and then.
- **Be realistic.** Be aware a reporter's job is to get news, not necessarily to make Rowan University or you look good.
- **Don't take it personally.** The reporter is neither your enemy nor your friend. He or she is an intermediary between you and the people you need to reach. And forget about your ego – nobody cares about it but you.

PR Play 9-11

HOWARD JOFFE

BEST EVIDENCE

EXECUTIVE MEDIA RELATIONS • CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS • VIDEO DEVELOPMENT

Top 10 List of Media Relations Mistakes

10. Lack of preparation/plan
9. Failure to identify audience
8. Reluctance to accept responsibility
7. Inability to show compassion
6. Failure to focus
5. Natural bias against reporters
4. Inability to shut mouth
3. Natural tendency to want to sound more intelligent than we really are
2. Fear & loathing
1. Panic

100 Springdale Road, Suite 120 Cherry Hill, NJ 08003-3398 Voice: 609.795.9229 Fax: 609.795.3990 Email: BestEvid@aol.com

PR Play 9-12
Building Strong Reporter Relationships

Learning more about the beat reporter or columnist who covers your industry for your local newspaper, radio or television station is an integral first step. After all, research is a key component of every public relations process.

There is no reason reporters should intimidate you. Many times, they need the company spokesperson as much as the company needs them. Former Gannett editor Ev Landers said, "Don't be afraid to make the first move. Once reporters know you, they will have an interest in what you know, develop a mutual trust and maybe even write about you."

Landers and others suggest picking up the phone and inviting the reporter for lunch or coffee. Offer to pay, but know that company policy may prohibit the reporter from accepting a "free lunch." (Let them pay for your meal if they offer – or split the check.)

1. Become familiar with the kinds of stories they cover so you can discuss them.
2. Take a media kit, background information or fact sheets they might find interesting. (Put them on a CD or "flash" drive they can keep.)
3. Offer yourself and your organization's employees as local experts for national stories.
4. Ask about other "areas" they cover or stories they are working on.
5. Don't talk off the record unless you fully understand the ramifications (PR Play 9-9.)
6. Ask about the reporter's personal interests, family, hobbies (relationship marketing).
7. Suggest story ideas and offer to do the "leg work" (research). Offer to provide names of those with opposing points of view.
8. If they write about you or your company, send a thank-you note (inside front cover) but never a gift.
9. Offer your home phone, cell phone and beeper numbers. If you are serious about your job, invite them to call you 24/7.
10. Ask, "How else can I help you?"
11. Exchange business cards.
12. Mail a thank-you note within 24 hours.
13. Keep in touch regularly. Offer feedback on their stories. Email helpful articles about their areas of expertise or their hobbies. Share news tips and story ideas.
14. Do lunch again in about six months.
15. Contact another reporter, from another news outlet, for the same kind of "mindshare" meeting.

- **Control what you can.** Release the bad news yourself – before some reporter digs it up. Use your selective availability to reporters as a tool. Set ground rules every time you talk. If the public isn't buying your message, change it.
- **Know with whom you are dealing.** The press is not a single entity. TV is different from print. Magazines are different from newspapers and the *Fairfield Daily Ledger* is different from *The Wall Street Journal*. Within any news organization there will be a normal mix of individuals, some honorable and competent, some not. Do your homework on journalists before you talk to them, reviewing their past work or talking to other executives they have covered. It's called "due diligence."
- **Avoid TV unless you feel you can speak candidly.** Even then, learn to present your views in the 10-second sound bites that are the building blocks of TV stories. Use simple declarative sentences and ignore subtleties. Whenever possible favor live TV shows over those that can edit your remarks.
- **Be human.** Reporters – and the public – usually will be more sympathetic to a person than to a corporation. If you can do it without lying or making a fool of yourself, show that you are a person with feelings. Then, the media may minimize your mistakes. Insist on being judged on a human scale, with normal human fallibility taken into account. Remember, people love to root for underdogs.

Purdue University
M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

Print Media Terms Every Practitioner Should Know

ABC – Abbreviation for Audit Bureau of Circulations, an organization that compiles statistics on circulation.

art – Photograph(s) or other graphics accompanying a print or Web story.

attribution – A line identifying the source of a quote.

back story – In both print and broadcast journalism, it is the copy or information toward the end of the story – but is still important.

banner – A headline stretching across the top of a page; also called a "*streamer*" or "*banner line*."

banner ad – Ad that stretches across the top of a printed page or horizontally across part or all of a Web page. Also called a *header*.

beat – A specific topic that a reporter usually covers (e.g., business, education, police, a municipality, a sports team, etc.).

blurb – A quotation or statement that is separated from the rest of a news story and sometimes set off with borders above and below – for emphasis. The quote is usually taken from the story it accompanies. Also called a *liftout quote* or *pull quote*.

boxcar – A teaser or banner head that runs above the nameplate is called a skybox or skyline. If they are boxed (with art), they are called skyboxes or boxcars. If they are only a line of type, they are called *skylines*.

broken display ad – Display ads usually disguised as editorial copy where an ad is inserted over the copy – sometimes "interrupting it" as an attention getter. Also known as an *interrupted display* ad.

bullet – A type, usually a big dot, used to highlight items listed in the text. Also called a *dingbat*.

byline – The reporter's name (or author's name), usually at the beginning of a story.

caption – A line or block of type providing descriptive information about a picture. Headline or text accompanying a picture or illustration. Also called a *cutline*.

center package – The major (lead) story in the center of a main page of a newspaper. Also called the centerpiece story. *USA Today* commonly uses this technique.

centerpiece story – The major (lead) story in the center of a main page of a newspaper. Also called the center package. *USA Today* commonly uses this technique.

classified advertising – Advertising arranged according to the product or service advertised, and usually restricted in size and format. The ads are "classified" into various categories such as help wanted, autos for sale, apartments for rent, etc.

column inch – A unit of measurement one inch deep and one column wide. Generally speaking, a 250-word release, double spaced, 12 point type, would become six column inches in the typical newspaper.

copy desk – The desk where copy is edited, headlined and placed on the page it will appear in the newspaper.

cover page – The first page in a section. Also called section front.

cutline – The copy (usually only a few lines) that accompanies and gives necessary information about a picture or "cut." Not as in depth as a caption.

dateline – Line at the beginning of an out-of-town story that indicates both the place and the date of origin of the story.

deadline – The last moment to get copy in for an edition.

display ad – Advertising matter other than in-column classified ads. They usually have a border.

dot whack – An ad, usually on front page of newspaper attached to as if it were a Post-it® or sticky note. Also called *popper* or *press-on* ad.

double truck – A two-page spread in a print publication, where the ad (editorial copy) runs across the middle gutter. It could be the center fold ("center spread") or any two full side-by-side pages (facing each other). If it prints across the gutter between the two pages, and if the pages are on the same sheet, rather than two adjacent sheets, it might be called a "true" double truck. This name comes from the days when the heavy forms for newspaper pages, largely filled with lead type, were rolled around the composing room floor on heavy carts called trucks. Two pages for one project meant a double truck.

ears – Space at the top of the front page on each side of the newspaper's name where weather news, index to pages or announcement of special features appears.

edition – A press run of a newspaper. A daily generally has more than one edition a day – for example, "City Edition," "Lakeshore Edition," "Early Edition," "Late Edition."

editorial – An article that expresses the opinion of the newspaper's editors and usually also reflects the opinion of the publisher or owner of the newspaper. The department of the newspaper where news is gathered, written, edited and readied for publication.

feature – Any story that has human interest value, even though it is not news in the strict sense.

filler – Short informational stories or advertisements, usually timeless, used to fill small spaces where needed.

first-day story – A story published for the first time and dealing with something that has just happened, as distinguished from a "follow-up" story.

First Amendment – The first article of the Constitution's Bill of Rights, guaranteeing Americans freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition.

five W's – Who? what? when? where? why? – the questions usually answered in the lead of a news story.

flag –The printed title (i.e., name and logo) of a newspaper at the top of the front page. Also called a *nameplate*.

folio – Newspaper name, date, and page number that appear at the top of each page.

follow-up – Story giving later developments of an event already reported.

footer ad – Display ad that stretches across the bottom of a printed or Web page. Also called *strip ad*.

general assignment – A reporter who covers a variety of stories rather than a single "beat."

graf – Newsroom slang for paragraph.

halftone – A picture or drawing that has been concerted into a pattern of tiny dots for reproduction in a newspaper or other print medium.

handout – A press (news) release – prepared material given to news people in the hope that it will be printed without change or that it will be helpful in preparing news stories.

hard news – (important news) – Straight news reporting without interpretation or background material.

head/header – Headline or special label for any regularly appearing section, page or story. Also called a *standing head*. Also, a *banner* ad that runs across the top of a newspaper page.

headline – Large type running above or beside a story to summarize its contents. Also called a *head*, for short.

hit – Each time a news story appears in or on a different media vehicle. In an Internet sense, it is a visit to a particular page on a website by a Web visitor. See *impression.*

hold – "Hold for release" instruction to hold a story until the editor releases it for publication.

hook – The stylistic device used by a reporter to draw a reader into the story.

hot – A label given to an important story.

human interest – Emotional appeal in the news. A "human interest" story, as compared with a "straight news" story, bases its appeal more on the unusual than on consequence.

impression – The number of potential readers, listeners or viewers who could see a printed or broadcast story, ad or commercial or number of visitors to a website. Impressions are based on a publication's circulation or a radio or television program's unduplicated audience. Some consider an impression the number of pairs of eyes or ears that will be exposed to a media vehicle. See *hit*.

index – Table of contents of the newspaper, usually found on Page One.

insert – A flyer or magazine that is placed into the folded newspaper after it has been printed.

interrupted display ad – Display ads usually disguised as editorial copy where an ad is inserted over the copy – sometimes "breaking it" as an attention getter. Also known as a *broken display* ad.

inverted pyramid – The standard news story structure in which facts are arranged in descending order of importance.

jump – To continue a story from one page to another.

jump line – The continuation instructions of a story that is jumped to another page (Continued on page 10; Continued from page 1).

kicker – Small headline, often in italics and sometimes underlined, above and slightly to the left of the main head. Usually, one line. In broadcast, the last or tagline of a commercial or public service announcement (PSA). Also called a *tagline* or *stinger*.

kill – To eliminate all or part of a story.

letter to the editor – A letter in which a reader expresses his or her views in the newspaper; usually printed on the editorial page or the page opposite the editorial page.

liftout quote – A quotation or statement that is separated from the rest of a news story and sometimes set off with borders above and below – for emphasis. The quote is usually taken from the story it accompanies. Also called a *blurb* or *pull quote*.

localize – To emphasize the local angle in an out-of-town story.

masthead – Statement of ownership, place of publication, executive personnel and other information about the newspaper, generally placed on the editorial page.

nameline – See *cutline*.

nameplate – The printed title (i.e., name and logo) of a newspaper at the top of the front page. Also called a *flag*.

news hole – The amount of space left for news after advertisements have been arranged on the page.

news services – News-gathering agencies such as the Associated Press or Reuters that distribute news to subscribing newspapers.

newsprint – A grade of paper made from recycled paper and wood pulp, used primarily for printing newspapers.

nut graph – The explanation paragraph that generally follows the lead *graph*. It explains the significance of the story and gives its news "peg." Some public relations practitioners also refer to *boiler plates* as *nut graphs*. However, boiler plates should be the final paragraph in a story.

obit or obituary – A biography of a dead person. Sometimes "canned obits" are kept on file in the newspaper's library to be used at the time of a prominent person's death.

offset press – A printing press in which the inked image is transferred from a plate to a rubber roller, which in turn puts the ink onto the paper.

op-ed – Commentary traditionally printed on page opposite the editorial page (Chapters 5 and 6) of a newspaper.

overline – The caption above a photograph.

Page One (or Page 1A) – The first page of the newspaper. Also refers to the importance of a story – as in "page one news."

pagination – Computerized newspaper page design.

piece – The general term applied to any newspaper article written by a reporter. Also called "*story*."

pix – Abbreviation for pictures.

popper – An ad, usually on front page of newspaper attached as if it were a Post-it®. Also call a *dot whack*.

population – In marketing research, the total group that a researcher wishes to study. The individuals whose opinions are sought in a survey. The population can be as broad as every adult in the United States or as focused as liberal Democrats who live in the Fifth Ward of Chicago and who voted in the last election. The sample is drawn to reflect the population. Sometimes called the *universe*.

porkchop – Half-column picture. Synonymous with *thumbnail*.

pox – Police.

promo – An eye-catching graphic element, usually on Page One or section front, that promotes an item inside. Also called a *teaser*.

public relations (journalist's definition) – The art or science of developing understanding and goodwill between a person, firm or institution and the public.

publisher – The chief executive and often the owner of a newspaper or other publishing firm.

pull quote – A quotation or statement that is separated from the rest of a news story and sometimes set off with borders above and below – for emphasis. The quote is usually taken from the story it accompanies. Also called a *blurb* or *liftout quote*.

put to bed – Printer's term meaning all the pages of an edition are completed and the presses are ready to roll.

Q and A – Copy in question and answer form, as in verbatim reports of court proceedings.

quotes – Quotation marks. A quote is a portion of a story that consists of direct quotations.

register or registration – Correct placement of printing on the sheet. In color printing, register means the correct placement of each plate so that the colors are laid down properly, without running "off-register."

ROP – Run-of-paper news and advertising that appears in any part of the paper. Convenient to the make-up of the paper.

second-day story – A "follow– up" story giving new developments on one that has already appeared in the newspaper.

second front page – The front page of a second section. Also called the "*split page*."

section – Separate parts of a newspaper.

section lead – Top story in a section.

sectional story – A major news story with different aspects, featured under two or more headlines.

series – A group of related stories generally run on successive days.

shirt tail – A short, related story added at the end of a longer one.

shoot – To take photographs. As a noun, a *shoot* is a photo session.

shot sheet – A list of photo opportunities that can be provided to a newspaper or magazine photographer, videographer, or one hired by the public relations practitioner coordinating an event.

sidebar – A secondary news story that supports or amplifies a major story.

skybox/skyline – A banner head that runs above the nameplate. Serves as a teaser. If they are boxed (with art), they are called skyboxes or box-cars. If they are only a line of type, they are called *skylines*.

slant – An angle of a story. A story is "slanted" when a certain aspect is played up for policy or other reasons.

soft copy – Copy seen on a computer screen.

source – A supplier of information. A person, document, etc.

split page – Usually the first page of the inside or second section (section B) of the newspaper carrying local, metro or area news; the second front page.

spot news – News obtained on the scene of an event, usually unexpectedly.

spread – The display given to an important story; a double spread is one across facing pages.

squib – A short news item; a filler.

stand-alone photo – A picture that doesn't accompany a story, usually boxed to show it stands alone. Also called *wild art*.

standing head – Headlines that do not change and are usually kept in a library file on a computer so they are ready for instant use. Also a special label for any regularly appearing section, page or story. Also called a *header*.

steeplechase ad – Ad that runs vertically up one side of a page or the other.

stet – A Latin term meaning "let it stand" – stetundum, Proofreader's notation instructing the printer to ignore a change marked on a proof.

story – The general term applied to any newspaper article written by a reporter. Also called "*piece*."

straight news – A plain account of news facts written in standard style and structure, without coloring or embellishments.

streamer – A multi-column headline leading a page, but not necessarily across its full width. Synonymous with *banner*.

stringer – A correspondent for a newspaper or a news agency, usually part-time, who often covers a certain subject or geographic area. The person is usually paid according to the number or length of stories printed by the newspaper.

strip ad – One or two inch-wide ad across the bottom of a page. (Example would be front page of *Courier-Post* or *USA Today*.) Also called a *footer ad*.

style book – A compilation of typographical and other rules formulated by a newspaper to make uniform its treatment of spelling, capitalization, abbreviations, punctuation, typography, etc. Most newspapers provide style books for their staffs' use.

subhead – Small, one-line headline inserted in the body of a story to break up the monotony of a solid column of small type.

summary deck – A sentence or two below a headline that introduces a story. Many times, summary decks are set in italics.

table – A graphic or sidebar that stacks words or numbers in rows so readers can compare data.

take – A portion of copy in a running story sent to the composing room in sections. Each page would be a *take* – Take 1 (page 1), Take 2 (page 2), etc. (In broadcasting, a "take" is each attempt at recording a story.)

tearsheet – A full page of the paper, including the folio, which has been clipped out and sent to an advertiser as proof that his or her ad has appeared.

teaser – An eye-catching graphic element, usually on Page One or section front, that promotes an item inside. Also called a *promo*.

text – The verbatim report of a speech or public statement.

think piece – A background or opinion article.

thumbnail – A half-column picture. See *porkchop*.

tie-back – The part of a story that ties it back to something that has already been published.

PR Play 9-13

'Journal' tries to start anew

By Al Neuharth
Founder of USA Today

The new year this week saw a highly publicized attempted regeneration of a 118-year-old newspaper which once was No. 1 in the nation. This year also will mark the 25th anniversary (Sept. 15) of the new kid on the block who dethroned the former champ.

The past 25-year history of both:

In 1982, *The Wall Street Journal* was tops in circulation with 1,925,000 copies sold each day. *USA Today* started then with zero.

Now, *USA Today* has 2,269,000 circulation; the *Journal* 2,043,000.

This week's "new" *Journal* hyped its content, but behind a still bland face. It reminded me of the fateful meeting noted pollster Lou Harris had with our Gannett board of directors after his extensive and expensive research in 1981 about a possible new national newspaper.

cont.

PR Play 9-13 continued

With copies of *The Wall Street Journal* spread in front of him, Harris said:

"A good newspaper is not necessarily dull. The TV generation will not fight its way through gray, insipid newspapers no matter how good they are." (Ditto the Internet generation.)

When we launched *USA Today*, a short page-one note highlighted these goals:

"Enlightening and enjoyable to the nation's readers."

"Challenging and competitive to the nation's journalists."

In last weekend's *Journal*, publisher L. Gordon Crovitz touted the "new" *Journal* in a lengthy letter, which read in part:

"We understand the concern at a time when so many once-authoritative news outlets have fallen to "journalism lite,' with fads and entertainment as news. Rest assured — as others dumb down, we intend to increase the amount of exclusive, highly distinctive coverage in the *Journal*."

Dumbing down, or dumbing up? "Enlightening and enjoyable" or "exclusive, highly distinctive"? As long as the competition for No. 1 continues, readers and advertisers will benefit. Stay tuned.

Feedback

"Readers don't give a fig if the paper they read is No. 1 on the Hit Parade or not; nor, luckily for them, do they really have to choose between the "either/or" attributes cited by Al. Long live the (enlightening) *Wall Street Journal* and the (highly distinctive) *USA Today*.

— Gloria Cooper, deputy executive editor,
Columbia Journalism Review

"Stay tuned, but not because one newspaper or the other wins the circulation war. Stay tuned, because now more than ever we need the best in quality, fearless journalism."

— Marvin Kalb, senior fellow at Harvard's Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy

Published: January 7, 2007

PR Play 9-14
Differences Among Media

	Magazine	Newspaper	Television	Radio
Deadline	Weekly/ Monthly	Morning/ Afternoon	Live/ Morning/ Afternoon/ Evening (Cable – 24/7)	Live/ every minute (24/7) for all news/ hourly for others
Needs	Photos/ Quotes	Photos/ Quotes	Scenes/ Sound bites	Natural sound/ Sound bites
Story Length	50-1,500 words	50-1,500 words	60-90 seconds	10-35 seconds
Reporter	Weeks on a story	A day or week on a story	A few hours on a story	20-30 minutes on a story

PR101: Media Relations
Mary Ortega and M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA

PR Play 9-15
Anatomy of a Newspaper – Typical Sunday Web version – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

World
U.S.
Washington
Business
Technology
Sports
Arts
New York/Region
Editorials
Op-Ed

PR Play 9-16

Anatomy of a Newspaper – Typical Sunday traditional hardcopy – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

Sections	
National/Foreign	**A**
City & Region	**B**
Currents (Editorials/Opinions)	**C**
Sports	**D**
Business	**E**
Automotive	**F**
Jobs	**G**
Arts & Entertainment	**H**
Real Estate	**J (I is omitted)**
New Homes	**K**
Neighbors	**L (Targeted to specific regions)**
Image	**M**
Travel	**N**

PR Play 9-17

Why send news releases? (Here are just a few reasons.)

- Accomplishments
- Appointments
- Breakthroughs
- Honors and awards
- Workshop presentations
- Anniversaries
- Major special events
- Death of key personnel
- Product launches
- Organization expansion
- Grants received
- Official announcements
- Survey results from polls you conducted or reaction to another's survey and your tie-in
- Retirements
- Event partnership(s)
- Position paper or op-ed offering
- Visit by VIP

tie-in – Used to connect one (possibly a sidebar) story with some other, perhaps more important, story.

total market coverage – If a newspaper covers only a percentage of its market through paid circulation, then a supplement has to be published/printed that would go free to the rest of the market.

trial balloon – A project or idea tentatively announced in the news media to test public opinion.

trim – To reduce the length of a story; same as boil down.

typo – Typographical error – a mechanical error in typing a story.

underline – See *cutline*.

universe – In marketing research, the total group that a researcher wishes to study and measure. Also, all people who are prospects for a specific product or service. See *population*.

wild art – A picture that doesn't accompany a story usually boxed to show it stands alone. Also called *stand-alone photo*.

wx – Weather.

zoned editions – Geographic region served by a newspaper. For example, *The New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* publish a city edition and zoned editions for their many suburbs.

Portions from *Newspapers In Education Partners In Education*
with modifications and additions by M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA –
Rowan University, Glassboro N.J.

Broadcast Media Terms Every Practitioner Should Know

actuality – The recorded words of someone who is part of a radio news story.

anchor interview – An interview conducted live by a television news anchor with a newsmaker either inside or outside of the studio.

assignment editor – Supervises and coordinates coverage by radio or television news gathering staff: Maintains contact with outside news agencies, police and fire departments, and other news sources to obtain information regarding developing news items. Determines priority and assigns coverage to news units. Works closely with the *news planner* at many television and radio news outlets.

B-Roll – Video accompanying a television story.

breaking news – News that is happening right now.

cop shop – Police headquarters.

cross platforming (media convergence) – The convergence of distribution – print, radio, television, broadband, wireless and digital signage. Also called *multiple platforming*.

doughnut (sandwich) – A reporter's on-location, live intro and close with pre-recorded video or audio. Also called a *wrap*.

live shot – An on-scene television or radio news story reported as it is happening.

media convergence – See *cross platforming*. Also called *multiple platforming*.

multiple platformting – See *cross platforming*. Also called *media convergence*.

narrowcasting – Targeting niche audiences through electronic media.

nat sound – Audio that's part of a television or radio news story but is not the sound of someone speaking directly into a microphone or to the camera (background sound).

news planner – Oversees daily and long-range newsroom planning Creates and maintains planning systems that help develop stories while working with newsroom journalists. Develops and executes planning systems day ahead, week ahead, month ahead and longer range planning and oversees planning meetings to review these events. Today's news planners use social media to find events/contacts that will lead to stories across multiple platforms. Works closely with the *assignment editor* at many television and radio news outlets.

newser – A news conference.

package – A pre-recorded television news story voiced by a reporter. It usually consists of standup or bridge, sound bites and B-roll.

phoner – An interview taped over the phone by either a radio or TV reporter.

reader (talent reader) – A TV news story with no accompanying video.

PR Play 9-18

Critical Thinking for Media Relations Specialists/News Release Writers

1. Why does your story matter? (The hook?)
2. What's the Point?
3. What does it say about Life? The World? The times we live in?

Connecting with Readers

1. What's the story about – in ONE word – sometimes, TWO?
   - Economy
   - Education (local schools)
   - Environment
   - Health Care
   - Social Security (two words)
   - War
   - Neighborhood (theirs)
   - Relationships (love)
   - Social Media
2. All about readers (target audience[s])
   - What surprised them?
   - What did they learn about themselves?

sandwich (doughnut) – A reporter's on-location, live intro and close with pre-recorded video or audio. Also called a *wrap*.

sound bite – The recorded words of someone who is part of a television news story.

take – Each attempt at recording a story is considered a "take."

talent reader – A TV news story with no accompanying video.

talking head – Close-up video of a newsmaker or newsperson speaking.

voice over sound or VO/SOT (sound on tape) – A television news story with accompanying video read by the anchor that leads into the recorded words of a newsmaker. (Similar to actuality except it is for TV.)

voicer – A pre-recorded radio news story voiced by a reporter.

wrap – A radio or TV news report voiced by a reporter and containing the voice of a newsmaker. (Similar to a *sandwich* and a *doughnut*.)

Courtesy of Kathy Kerchner – Interspeak, Scottsdale, AZ, and Debra Gelbart – Mercy Healthcare Arizona, Phoenix, AZ, with modifications and additions by M. Larry Litwin, APR, Fellow PRSA – Rowan University, Glassboro N.J.

EXERCISES

PR Challenge 9-1

As a public relations practitioner or media relations director, new to a job and to a region, what immediate steps would you take to develop relationships with the local media? List the first five steps that are absolute and then five you would take as time permits.

PR Challenge 9-2

Referring to PR Play 9-9, how do you justify to your "boss" that he or she should go "off the record" in discussing certain issues? If you are opposed to going "off the record," why?

PR Challenge 9-3

If you decide to hold an "in-service" for reporters, what strategic message would you send to persuade them to attend?

PR Challenge 9-4

PR Play 9-17 lists a number of reasons to prepare and send a news release. Can you list five others?

PR Challenge 9-5

Please respond to the following questions using as many or as few words as necessary. You may refer to other chapters in *The Public Relations Practitioner's Playbook for (all) Strategic Communicators* to support your responses:

1. How would you develop relationships with the media?
2. Once you establish a relationship with a reporter, editor or news director, how would you maintain it?
3. What might be the biggest obstacle you would encounter when dealing with the media?
4. What skills are necessary for dealing with the media?

5. How do you feel about so-called transparency and open communication?
6. Is open communication essential to public relations and when might it have to be avoided – at least temporarily?
7. Do you feel public communication is essential to public relations?
8. What do you feel is the most essential, effective or efficient form of public communication?

CHAPTER 14

Being Ready For A Crisis [Tell it *First* – Tell it *Fast* – Tell it *All* – Tell it *Yourself*]

Crisis is defined in *The American Heritage Dictionary* as "a crucial point or situation in the course of anything; a turning point." It is also defined as "an unstable condition…in which an abrupt or decisive change is pending."

The same publisher defines *communication* as "the exchange of thoughts, messages…speech, signals or writing."

Successful public relations practitioners view a crisis as "a situation you plan for but hope never occurs – but if it does, you are prepared."

Firms and organizations should develop two types of *crisis plans* – an *operational* plan and a *communication* plan. Operational plans are designed to keep organizations functioning. This chapter concentrates on the communication plan – successful communication techniques used during an unstable period or during a surprise situation that might have a short decision time.

A lack of crisis planning could make a bad situation worse, could have dangerous side effects or it could even spell doom. The book, *Public Relations…Strategies and Tactics* (Wilcox, Ault and Agee), states, "How an organization responds in the first 24 hours (of a crisis) often determines whether the situation remains an incident or becomes a full-blown crisis."

Strategic communication guru, Anne Sceia Klein, APR, PRSA Fellow, of Anne Klein Communications Group (Mount Laurel, N.J.), has years of experience that prove the first hour or two following a crisis are the most crucial. "After that," she says, "It's a whole different ballgame." Her advice, "Be prepared for that first news media call" (no matter how qucikly it comes).

Practice Your ABCs

Those first few hours (two to four) are considered the communication director's Golden Hours. Successful strategic counselors think about their "ABCs" –

- A=Anticipate
- B=Be prepared
- C=Communicate clearly, calculatingly (measure each word), concisely, consistently, completely (specifically and simply) – and correctly.

Tell it **FIRST** – Tell it **FAST** – Tell it **ALL** – Tell it **YOURSELF**.

Like so much in our profession, the key to a successful crisis communication plan is *anticipation*. Anticipation is not predicting, but rather being prepared beforehand. Even the best communicator can boast all he or she wants about having advance knowledge or a premonition. But whether or not the practitioner possesses that innate ability isn't the key. The key to a successful reaction is planning – being ready for that event "just in case it happens." However, it must be kept in mind that a plan is just that – a plan.

Live and YouTube videos and case studies of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing are proof positive – and reinforce – that well- planned crisis organizational and communication plans do work. Federal, state, local law enforcement and other officials (more than 30 agencies) did their best to collaborate and cooperate so that Plays 14-1 and 14-3's rules could be followed as closely as possible – maintaining the proper emotional tone.

Klein suggests that one way for practitioners to anticipate is to answer the question, "Is there anything that keeps me awake at night?"

No matter the response, practitioners must recognize that no two crises are the same. Thus, there is no "cookie-cutter" approach.

"Nothing is more important during a crisis than good, quick, effective, accurate communication," says J. William Jones, retired corporate public affairs officer at PECO® (an Exelon® Company) in Philadelphia and the former director of public affairs for the School District of Philadelphia. "Effective management response is the key to credibility."

That was evident on Dec. 14, 2012 – a day most will never forget. Soon after classes began on that Friday, a mass shooting occurred at Sandy

Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. Twenty first graders – 6- and 7-year-olds – and six teachers and other educators were brutally murdered by a 20-year-old gunman who earlier had shot his mother to death in her house and eventually took his own life inside the school.

The details of the horrific event – a tragedy of unspeakable terms – remained in the news for months. The following paragraphs are not about the tragedy, but rather about textbook crisis communication led by Connecticut State Police Lt. Paul Vance, whose years of experience were obvious. He followed the "Three Rules of Crisis Communication" by immediately controlling the message, getting the information out quickly and in his own terms (See Play 14-1) and link to:

http://newyork.cbslocal.com/video/8069787-gov-dan-malloy-and-lt-paul-vance-brief-on-connecticut-school-shooting/

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFWA29yhTuE

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KfW9cBnHeJ0

It was evident from the moment Connecticut Gov. Dannel Malloy turned the news briefing over to Lt. Vance the media respected and trusted him. Vance was direct and forthright. Like other first responders, he was making extraordinarily difficult decisions under time pressures – fully understanding his responsibilities.

Said Vance soon after arriving on the scene: "This is an active, ongoing investigation. There's a great deal of work to go. And there are a lot of things we cannot confirm or discuss as of yet."

He recounted what he knew detail by detail commencing with the first 911 "call for help at the Sandy Hook Elementary School" shortly after 9:30 a.m. He said the response to the first call "was instantaneous."

Showing compassion, he said first and foremost police were concerned for the safety and welfare of everyone inside the building "knowing it was a potential active shooter situation. They (first responders) immediately entered the school. Their focus was to search for students, faculty and staff and remove them to a safe area outside of the school."

"They did search every nook and cranny, every room, and every portion of that school and accomplished that task. They took the rescued to a 'staging area' to reunite them with family members. As has been reported, there were fatalities," he said.

Lt. Vance went on to painstakingly describe the gruesome details including the death of the shooter who was found inside the school. He said there is a "great deal of work going on" including identifications and crime scene examinations.

"We need to establish identity," he said. "We need to document the entire scene. Simply stated, we need to answer every single question so we know how and why this incident occurred. We are not even putting a time stamp on when we will complete this project."

Lt. Vance then took questions reminding the media, "This is an active on-going case and there are things that we cannot and will not discuss at this time."

While he did attempt to answer all of the questions, he clearly demonstrated his crisis communication expertise in employing the "pseudo no comment." Not once did he say "no comment" or even mention the word "comment" as he dodged sensitive questions or those for which he did not have the facts.

Lt. Vance explained why he could not discuss certain aspects – often reiterating what had been said explaining, "that's as much as we want to go into detail." At no time did the media appear dissatisfied.

He said a final report would contain answers to all questions. That initial briefing and those that followed ended with Lt. Vance scheduling the next briefing – some within "60 minutes at which time I will try to have answers to some of your questions and more detail." When a scheduled briefing did not start promptly, media appeared patient because of the trust he evoked, his preparation and thoroughness. He was both credible and believable.

As he was leaving the first briefing, Lt. Vance turned back to the microphones stating, "One thing I would like to say is we have been meeting with all of the family members. It's a very difficult scene for the family members – all of the first responders. It's a tragic scene. We have been asked by the family members to ask the press to respect their privacy and to please leave them alone at this time. They are going through a tremendous amount of grief, which I am sure you can appreciate."

In response to a question about the scene, he said out of respect to the families and others he would not describe what he saw: "I have been a trooper a long time and my lieutenant to my left has been in law

enforcement a long time and describing it serves no useful purpose. It is a horrific scene. Between our mutual experience we have never seen anything like this. It is heart wrenching for us as it is for the families. I would just like to leave it at that."

Throughout each briefing, Lt. Vance's compassion and incredible patience with the media never wavered. As he responded to many of the same or similar questions, he repeated the facts, as he knew them, about the "massive investigation."

"An investigation like this," he said, "is like a puzzle. We want to put this puzzle together and form a complete picture so that everyone without any doubt what so ever can truly understand what occurred. We will send you out a news release, a press release. If you are not on our email list get it off the Associate Press (wire service). Primarily, it will contain all the details of all the briefings." Reporters were assured that fact sheets and releases would be available at the media "staging area," on the state police website and on (the) AP.

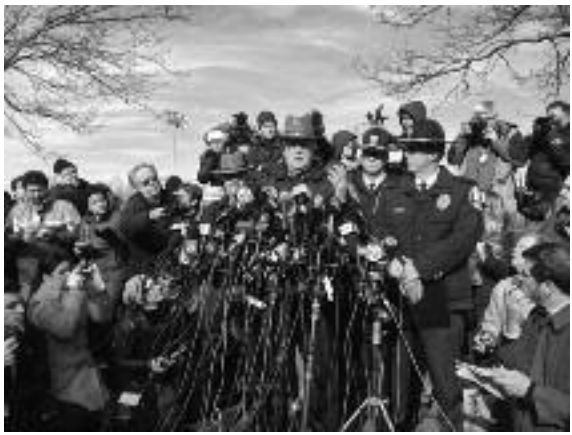
He made a point of commending the partnership between Newtown Police, state police, federal law enforcement and local police from other states and then urged the media "not to read anything (speculate about other police jurisdictions) into what he was saying. We are not going to hide anything from you."


Lt. J. Paul Vance

Lt. Vance's concluding statement from that – lengthy – first briefing illustrated the mutual respect he, his colleagues and the media had for each other: "(It's) all hands on deck. We will get this done in a timely fashion. Give us until morning. Hopefully we can tie up some loose ends first thing in the morning. We will fill in the voids tomorrow as much as we possibly can."

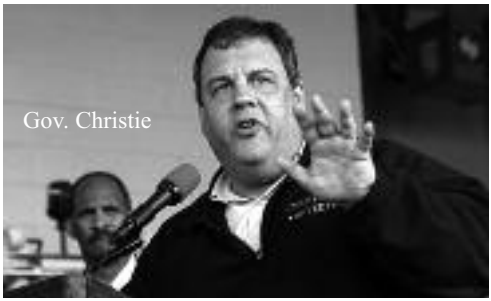
During the briefing, which was quintessential crisis communication, Lt. Vance touched on the crisis operation plan – a description which could be used for the communication plan, as well: "First responders who were first in the door with surrounding police departments and the

troopers – this is something that you train for…you plan for. You work towards. You hope they'll never have to use. Their training kicked in. They saved a lot of lives. They did a great job. They did a great job."



Connecticut State Police Lt. J. Paul Vance and other state and local police fielding questions near Sandy Hook Elementary School during the first of many news briefings. Such impromptu media conferences are described as "media scrums."

Another example of how the ABCs of strategic communication was implemented would be actions taken prior to and during the October 2012 Superstorm Sandy, which struck much of the coast from the Carolinas to New England. It, especially, wreaked havoc on the New York and New Jersey coastlines. New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and dozens of mayors demonstrated their crisis communication prowess by holding news conferences days in advance – unveiling their operational plans.



While property damage was in the billions and more than 110 died, the consensus was clear – without **A**nticipation, preparation (**B**e prepared) and clear **C**ommunication, human loss and suffering would have been far worse.

The nonpartisan cooperation – established days before Sandy hit New Jersey – is best illustrated by Gov. Christie, staunch backer of Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney. "It's been very good working with the president," Christie said on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*. "He and his administration have been coordinating with us. It's been wonderful."

On NBC's "Today," Christie said the president had been "outstanding" and FEMA's response has been "excellent."

The Republican governor also sent out a thankful tweet: "I want to thank the president personally for all his assistance as we recover from the storm."

Christie said, "The president has been all over this and he deserves great credit. I've been on the phone with him personally (sometimes) three times a day including midnight. He gave me his number at the White House, told me to call him if I needed anything. And he absolutely means it."

It was 17 years earlier that PECO's Jones had to deal with tragedy. He was a member of the strategic counseling team that advised PECO® management to accept blame after a 1995 gas explosion in its service area left two people dead and rocked a neighborhood in Suburban Philadelphia. PECO's® president and CEO uttered the magic words, "It was our fault." At the time, other than Johnson & Johnson® taking the direct approach, few organizations had. The PECO® team received universal praise as evidenced by some of the newspaper headlines below:

Some Headlines from PECO® December 1995 residential gas explosion

SORRY
Peco prez: Response in fatal gas blast was 'unacceptable and regrettable'
Philadelphia Daily News – December 20, 1995

PECO does the right thing
Philadelphia Daily News – December 26, 1995

PECO takes blame in fatal blast
The Reporter – December 20, 1995

PECO: It's our fault
Daily Times – December 21, 1995

Peco's mea culpa hailed as 'brilliant'
Savvy PR, Despite firm's blast liability
Philadelphia Daily News – December 22, 1995

That same direct approach was evident when with both engines out, a cool-headed pilot (Chesley Sullenberger) maneuvered his crowded jetliner over New York City and splash landed in the frigid Hudson River (January 2009). Miraculously, all 155 on board were pulled to safety as the plane slowly sank. One victim suffered two broken legs, a paramedic said, but there were no other reports of serious injuries.

New York Governor David Paterson called it "a miracle on the Hudson."

STEVEN DAY / Associated Press

Passengers and crew wait on the wings of a jetliner that safely ditched in the Hudson River in New York after geese knocked out both of its engines.

The plane, a US Airways Airbus A320 bound for Charlotte, N.C., struck a flock of geese during takeoff three minutes earlier at LaGuardia Airport and was submerged up to its windows in the river as rescuers converged from both sides of the Hudson – Manhattan and Newark, N.J. Rescuers arrived in Coast Guard vessels, ferries, water taxis, tugboats, inflatable rescue craft and ships from Circle Line. By the time the first vessels arrived – within 90 seconds of the plane hitting the water – passengers were exiting onto the partially submerged wings while others waded in water up to their knees. The crash took place on a 20-degree day, one of the coldest of the season in New York. The water temperature was 36 degrees.

Within two hours, Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his crisis team leaders – with his gathered facts in hand and for distribution to reporters – faced the media on national television from the New York side of the

Hudson. He opened: "Let me tell you what we know happened and what we don't know, yet. We have just witnessed grace under pressure."

It was clear, both his operational and crisis communication plans had been carried out flawlessly.

Even before Bloomberg spoke, about 90 minutes after the plane "ditched," US Airways Chair and CEO Doug Parker was addressing the media from company headquarters in Phoenix, Ariz. He did not take questions so he could immediately fly to New York City. His strategic statement follows:

> I can confirm US Airways Flight 1549 was involved in an accident. The Airbus A320 was en route to Charlotte from LaGuardia. It had 150 passengers on board. The flight was operated with a crew of two pilots and three flight attendants. US Airways is confirming passenger and crew names and will issue those as soon as possible. At this point, no additional details can be confirmed. Our preliminary report is that everyone is off the plane and accounted for.
>
> We've activated our US Airways care team of specially trained employee volunteers to assist those affected by this accident. Individuals who believe they may have family members on board Flight 1549 may call US Airways at 1-800-679-8215 within the United States. The number can be reached toll free from international locations through AT&T's U.S.A. Direct. To contact an AT&T operator please visit www.usa.att.com/traveler for U.S.A. Direct access codes. Others are asked, please, not to call this number so the lines can be kept available for those who truly need them.
>
> It's premature to speculate about the cause of this accident. Out of respect for those affected we would ask that you also resist the temptation to speculate.
>
> The National Transportation Safety Board will conduct a thorough investigation to determine the probable cause with our complete support and the support of many others. Further, we are working with and will continue to cooperate fully with the N.T.S.B., local, state and national authorities and answers will emerge during the course of that investigation.

> Right now we're working to care for those who have been touched by this accident. Members of our airline family will come together with these families to help however we can. I am on my way to New York shortly.
>
> In closing, safety is, has been and forever will be our foremost priority at US Airways. All of us at US Airways are committed to determining the cause of this event and to assisting in every way possible in preventing a similar occurrence.
>
> US Airways will continue to release information as it becomes available. Please monitor usairways.com for the latest information.

Pennsylvania Gov. Mark Schweiker also used the direct approach when he took control of a crisis in Pennsylvania (July 2002) after nine coal miners were trapped underground. Schweiker, the point person, was described as responsive, forthright and compassionate throughout the ordeal. His care and concern were visible at every news briefing. When it was determined that all nine miners were alive and relatively healthy, it was Schweiker who delivered the good news enthusiastically, raising his arms in triumph. Pennsylvania had a plan.

In contrast, it soon became apparent Pennsylvania State University followed none of the crisis communication rules in the Jerry Sandusky child sex-abuse scandal. Penn State did not react within the Golden Hours. In fact, its administration and ultimately its board did not respond to the crisis for days and in some cases, weeks.

A scientific survey conducted by *The Philadelphia Inquirer* proved perception is reality. The phone survey of 601 likely Pennsylvania voters conducted from Aug. 21 through 23, 2012 had a statistical margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

"*The Philadelphia Inquirer* Pennsylvania Poll found the state's voters widely disapproved of the way figures such as former Pennsylvania State University President Graham Spanier, head football coach Joe Paterno, and Gov. (Tom) Corbett handled allegations against the former assistant coach convicted in June 2012 of molesting 10 boys.

"Only 10 percent of those polled said they approved of Spanier's handling of the crisis, as opposed to the 77 percent who thought he had bungled the job.

PR Play 14-1

Three Rules of (Damage Control) Crisis Communication

1. Get information out early.
   - Respond within 2-4 hours (quicker, if possible) – if only as an acknowledgment that you are on top of the situation.
2. Get it out yourself.
   - The spokesperson should be a high profile representative of the organization.
3. Get it out on your own terms – control the message.
   - Tell it ***First***
   - Tell it ***Fast***
   - Tell it ***All***
   - Tell it ***Yourself***

"Paterno fared slightly better with a 28 percent approval rating and 65 percent who said they were disappointed by his actions.

"Only 17 percent of poll respondents said they approved of how Corbett had approached the investigation, while 61 percent found his decisions lacking."

Public Deserves Answers

Whether the crisis is the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing, child sex-abuse at Penn State University or some less visible organization, or a mass shooting at a school or movie theater, a major charity executive embezzling funds, the (seven) Tylenol-related deaths in 1982, or a space shuttle tragedy, the public wants and deserves answers.

As J. William Jones says, those answers must be based on accurate information and should be given by "unflappable" professionals who know what they are talking about.

The need for crisis management policies has become a major priority for many corporations and other organizations. Thanks to effective plan-

ning, victim organizations can control a crisis through rapid systematic dissemination of information – being proactive rather than reactive – so long as that information is factual.

PR Play 14-2

Phases of an Emergency

- Initial Crisis
- Successive Events
- Follow-up Management

Strategic counselors and reporters alike agree there is no substitute for believability (truth) and credibility (trust). Once lost, they are nearly impossible to regain. Avoid any instincts to minimize or cover up bad news. If not totally truthful and trustworthy, the media will eventually discover your unprofessional approach. Whatever trust you once had will be gone forever.

PR Play 14-3

Communicate Early and Often

- Contact the media before they contact you.
- Communicate internally first, then externally.
- Put the public first.
- Take responsibility.
- Be honest.
- Never say "No comment."
- Designate a single spokesperson.
- Set up a central information center (staging area).
- Provide a constant flow of information.
- Be familiar with media needs and deadlines.
- Monitor news coverage and telephone inquiries.
- Communicate with key publics.
- Be accessible.

Keep in mind, when dealing with a crisis, the goal should be more than just "damage control." If the crisis communication plan is carried out properly and successfully, the damage control will take care of itself.

When a crisis hits, your publics want to know: what happened; how it will affect them; what is going to be done about it.

For the most part, there are two major categories of crises – *natural* and *man-made*.

Examples of *natural crises*:
- Created by acts of nature – tornados, hurricanes, blizzards
- Flood
- Flu epidemic

Examples of *man-made crises*:
- Terrorism
- Bomb threat
- Stock market crash

Developing a Crisis Communication Plan

No matter under which category your crisis falls, you will need an effective, proven, near-flawless (proactive) plan.

- The first step in any well-crafted strategic plan is research. But during a crisis, there may not be time enough to find the source or cause. If resources permit, appoint someone on staff to try to locate the cause. Meanwhile, others should be gathering the facts. Those facts will greatly assist in communicating accurate information and minimizing rumors. No matter the magnitude of the crisis, only one person should be designated as a spokesperson. This helps assure control of the situation, which should sway public opinion to your side.
- Gathering the facts and implementing your plan should be simultaneous. During the first session (within those Golden Hours) with the media or the first communiqué from the public relations office, it may have to be explained, "This is the information we have thus far. As additional facts are gathered we will continue to keep you informed or we will schedule media briefings." This will help manage and control the flow of information. Operating from a "staging area" or "situation ("war") room" – possibly at an alternate site (to help control the situation and maintain calm) – has proven successful. It could be a small conference room or a large office. No matter where you choose to locate your staging area, a central facility should be used to gather and disseminate information. It should be a room equipped with hardline phones, wireless technology (Wi-fi), computers, copiers, etc. (See Emergency Management Kit, PR Play 14-11.)

- All employees should be aware, in advance, that management does have a crisis plan. They don't have to know how the plan works unless they are part of its implementation. However, if a crisis hits, that plan should be publicized, first internally and then to outside publics. It is the internal family who helps communicate calm and control to external publics. That internal family should include more than employees. It may include stakeholders (possibly neighbors of an oil refinery that may be emitting fumes into the atmosphere).

- If you have the luxury of running *crisis drills*, do so. During the drills, gather feedback from people you trust. They could be employees, reporters, key communicators (Chapter 15 – Other PR Tools), independent evaluators or crisis management personnel from other organizations.

PR Play 14-4

The Role of Public Relations in the Johnson & Johnson® Tylenol® Crisis

The public relations decisions related to the Tylenol crisis and the product's strong comeback came in two phases.

Phase one was the crisis phase, which began on the morning of September 30, 1982, with the grim news of the cyanide poisonings. Since the extent of the contamination was not immediately known, there was grave concern for the safety of the estimated 100 million Americans who were using Tylenol. The first critical public relations decision, taken immediately and with total support from company management, was to cooperate fully with the news media. The press was key to warning the public of the danger.

Later it was realized that no meeting had been called to make that critical decision. The poisonings called for immediate action to protect the consumer, and there wasn't the slightest hesitation about being completely open with the news media. For the same reasons the decision was made to recall two batches of the product, and later to withdraw it nationally. During the crisis phase of the Tylenol tragedy, virtually every public relations decision was based on sound, socially responsible business principles, which is when public relations is most effective.

cont.

PR Play 14-4 continued

Almost immediately, planning began for phase two, the comeback, and this involved a more detailed and extensive public relations effort that closely followed important marketing decisions and reached out to many audiences. The comeback began officially with a 30-city video press conference via satellite, an innovative approach suggested by Burson-Marsteller, the public relations agency responsible for Tylenol product publicity.

The video conference and all other key decisions were discussed and debated by a seven-member strategy committee formed by Chairman and CEO James E. Burke to deal with the Tylenol crisis. The committee included a public relations executive and met twice daily for six weeks. The decisions it made dealt with every aspect of the problem – from packaging to advertising to appearances on network television. Many required follow-up by the public relations staff at corporate and at McNeil Consumer Products Company – the subsidiary that manufactures Tylenol.

The Tylenol tragedy proved once again that public relations is a business of basics, and that the best public relations decisions are closely linked to sound business practices and a responsible corporate philosophy.

Lawrence G. Foster
Corporate Vice President-Public Relations
Johnson & Johnson

- Just as research is the first step in any plan, evaluation is the final step. As Jones puts it, "All crises have at least one thing in common. Eventually, they end." That's when you evaluate your plan, its successes and its failures. If you made a mistake, do as PECO® did, admit it. Just don't let it happen again. By recognizing mistakes or shortcomings, you should be able to build a better plan for the next crisis.

Every step should be reviewed (keep a minute-by-minute diary). Don't be afraid to ask everyone involved for feedback – staff, reporters, key communicators, other members of the public, etc.

PR Play 14-5
Lessons Learned

- Don't duck the issue.
- Take responsibility.
- Offer to make good on broken promises.
- Cover all the bases.
- Measure results.

KDPaine & Partners, LLC • www.measuresofsuccess.com

PR Play 14-6
Get Down to Basics

1. When a crisis breaks, first, before anything else, get the facts – gather information.
2. Once you have the facts, determine which changes must be made in the strategic plan to best manage this particular crisis.
3. Communicate your plan, first internally, then externally.
4. Seek feedback.
5. Evaluate your plan.

PR Play 14-7
The 10 D's of Crisis Communication

- Direct
- Distance
- Deflect
- Distract
- Divert
- Diffuse
- Defuse
- Dilute
- Dissolve
- Dodge

Initial Crisis

- Recognize there is a crisis.
- Inform staff of the crisis.
- Put both crisis plans – communication and operational – into action ("everyone to their stations").

- Establish command post (staging area – situation room) and begin gathering facts (first true step):
  1. Extent of the disaster
  2. Names of all involved
  3. Are there injuries and if so, at what locations
  4. Retrieve information from computer
- Activate communication network:
  1. Smartphones, tablets, PCs and laptops
  2. Establish contact with team members (your so-called crisis cabinet)
- Establish communication with emergency agencies
- Decision making:
  1. Assign and reassign staff depending on type of crisis
  2. Schedule news briefings
  3. Determine need for such support services as food, shelter, security, counseling, etc.

Successive Events

- Determine who will communicate with families of victims (injured or killed).
- Maintain contact with media through briefings, news conferences, releases, interviews and continuous blast texts. (Do not play favorites.)
- Deal with rumors (as resources permit, one staff member should be assigned the task of dissolving rumors).
- Be prepared for additional emergencies.

Follow-up Management

- Continue the flow of information.
- Continually evaluate and adjust your plan.

Knowing the difference between media training and presentation training could be pivotal. Media training is more concerned with looks, gestures and mannerisms. Actual presentations need rehearsals to work on delivery, key message points and tone setting. Rehearsals and presentations should be video and audio taped – and viewed and listened to – so that adjustments can be made (Chapter 10).

Hindsight is 20-20. But one thing has been proven time and again — the lesson to be learned when dealing with a crisis is to adopt a philosophy similar to that of KDPaine & Partners, LLC headquartered in Berlin, N.H. (www.measuresofsuccess.com):

- ***Don't duck the issue*** – Every time a company tries to "stonewall" or deny the story, the media will gather information and print or air it. Companies that take a forthright approach to their crises reduce publicity almost immediately.

- ***Take responsibility*** – It is important to accept responsibility immediately and offer to fix the problem. Take a page from Taco Bell®. In December 2006, an E.coli outbreak struck a relatively small number of its 5,800 restaurants, but sent dozens of customers to hospitals – some seriously ill. Taco Bell® took action. "We immediately notified health officials and voluntarily closed several restaurants in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Delaware," said Greg Creed, Taco Bell® president. "The public's safety continues to be our utmost concern, and we will actively support an industry coalition including government regulators, competitors, suppliers and other experts to develop improved guidelines and procedures to safeguard the product supply chain and public health." Taco Bell® established a toll-free number to answer questions and deal with concerns. That's the kind of decisive action that must be taken.

- ***Cover all bases*** – In the Tylenol tragedy, J & J® removed its product from store shelves and warehouses nationwide, absorbed the losses, eventually developed an improved product with several safety devices on the packages and offered consumers "gift certificates" for any product they disposed of. Simultaneously, J & J®, through its corporate public relations office, cooperated fully with the news media (using a single spokesperson).

PR Play 14-8

Crisis Management Tips from Professionals

1. Even the most carefully laid plans must be constantly re-evaluated and refined.
2. Planning is just the beginning.
3. Every crisis is different and when one occurs, it is a mistake to assume a plan will handle all the answers.
4. In a crisis, the best defense is staying on your toes.

- ***Offer to make good on broken promises*** – During alleged "profiling" of minority drivers on the New Jersey Turnpike, Gov. Christine Todd Whitman promised to correct it. When it became apparent that wasn't happening, she called for the resignation of the state police superintendent. (He sued the state and governor for forcing him out of office. The courts found in favor of the governor.)

- ***Measure results*** – Monitor the news media – using search engines and alerts. Press clipping services are more efficient than ever. This is also a wonderful opportunity to tap your key communicators (feel their pulse [Chapter 15]) to help determine whether your approach is on course. Kathryn (Katie) Paine of KDPaine & Partners, LLC, reminds us, "In a crisis, the goal can never be to squelch negative coverage completely. Rather, it must be to shorten the life span of the bad news, to minimize those messages you don't want to see in print and get as many of your key messages out there as possible."

Almost immediately after a crisis hits, management must determine which of the so-called 10 D's it is going to use in its approach to communicating. Whichever is chosen, credibility must never be in doubt.

- ***Direct*** – to take charge with authority. (This is the newest approach to dealing with a crisis. It is a head-on approach to controlling or managing a situation. NASA's top administrators took the ***Direct*** approach [at the four hour mark] following the disintegration of the space shuttle Columbia in February 2003.)

- ***Distance*** – attempt to separate itself from the cause. (During Vice President Al Gore's presidential campaign, every effort was made to distance himself and other Democrats running for office from President Clinton because of Mr. Clinton's involvement with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.)

- ***Deflect*** – attempt to shift the blame. (In the Tylenol case, law enforcement officials did the deflecting for J & J®. Investigators determined that the tainting of the capsules was not done on J & J® premises and J & J® was not to blame.)

PR Play 14-9

Considerations Your *Single* Spokesperson *Must* Keep in Mind (During *A Crisis*)

- Do your homework.
- Be accessible.
- Be prompt and dependable.
- Avoid being pushed into easy solutions.
- Accept responsibility.
- Be responsive and forthright, and show compassion for victims and their families.
- Bluffing an answer is not acceptable – wait until you have the correct information.
- Speak and write your information clearly.
- Be prepared to respond to incorrect information.
- Remain calm and confident – at all times maintaining the proper emotional tone.

- ***Distract*** – attempt to divert focus or attention from a firm or organization. (Also called "The Tail Wagging the Dog," meaning an item of minor importance is created to intentionally influence events or gain more attention than the larger and more important event [in this case, the crisis]. This is not recommended. J & J® never attempted to sidetrack the media or consumer by placing blame elsewhere. It took quick, forceful and responsible action. In contrast, Penn State did not communicate for several days and its board of trustees avoided blame.)
- ***Diffuse*** – attempt to soften the blame on yourself by spreading out the cause. (In May 2000, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration issued a letter to Ford® and Bridgestone-Firestone® requesting information about the high incidence of tire failure on Ford Explorer® vehicles. During July 2000, Ford obtained and analyzed the data on tire failure. "The data revealed that 15 inch ATX and ATX II models and Wilderness AT tires had very high failure rates: the tread peels off. Many of the tires were made at a Decatur, Illinois, plant. Worse, when the tires fail the vehicle often rolls over and kills the occupants." Initially, Bridgestone-Firestone and Ford Motor Company attempted to shift the blame to each other. In the end, they did the right thing. Even though they eventually accepted responsibility, the diffused approach was taken, with both companies attempting to ease

PR Play 14-10

Successful Crisis PR Depends on Planning and the Practitioner's Mindset. Needed Are:

- A strategic communication process in place
- Support from senior management
- Communication with the chief strategic counselor or someone with direct access to senior management
- Good relations and credibility with the news media
- Effective internal communication
- Strong peer relations, especially with attorneys
- Ability to "fly the plane" so to speak

C. Fernando Vivanco – The Boeing Company – and
Kathleen L. Lewton – Fleishman-Hillard, Inc.

the pain and prevent a similar crisis. Penn State's board could be accused of diffusing blame.)

- ***Defuse*** – attempt to prevent the "explosion" before it occurs. (J & J® did defuse the situation by accepting, or giving the perception of accepting, full responsibility whether or not it was fully at fault. J & J® manufactured the product. That was enough for upper management to do what it could to pull the plug [fuse] on a popular product, make good on consumer losses and maintain the public's confidence.)
- ***Dilute*** – to weaken. This is similar to *diffuse*, but isn't necessarily the spread of blame. It is an approach that clarifies a situation by demonstrating that it is not as "bad" as perceived. (In the Lewinsky matter, President Clinton was asked a number of questions about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky. Mr. Clinton attempted to weaken the interrogator by asking him to define "sex" and convincing enough senators that he should remain in office and not be convicted on impeachment.)
- ***Dissolve*** – to cause to disappear or vanish. (It is nearly impossible to dissolve a crisis or alleged crisis. That is why rumors can be so damaging. Too many times, people remember the first thing they hear about a topic. [Who was it that said, "We get only one chance to make a good first impression"?] Johnson and Johnson® did *dissolve* its Tylenol® crisis by launching the "caplet," which replaced the "capsule." J & J® not only regained its market share for Tylenol, but increased it – almost unheard of.)

PR Play 14-11
Emergency Management Kits

No matter the industry or profession, when a crisis or emergency hits, you should be just as ready with your own Emergency Management Kit (EMK) of communication-type items as you would be with a first-aid kit containing bandages, antiseptics, alcohol, etc. Below is one strategic counselor's suggestion for an EMK. Its contents might depend on the type of company or organization and staff size. You or your staff should customize your own, determine quantities and keep it current. Emergency Management Kits and copies of a Crisis Communication Plan should be in several locations so that if an emergency hits, the plan and kit will not be in a quarantined area. It should be quickly accessible by smartphones, tablets and other devices.

At the very minimum, it should contain:

1. Copy of Crisis Communication Plan (keep the plan on a password protected website link, USB "flash" drive, CD and hard copy.) Be certain it is up to date. The website could be kept "dark" until a crisis hits – known as a "dark website."
2. Legal pads.
3. Pens (ballpoint, felt tip [Bic® and Sharpie® brands are dependable]).
4. Large felt-tip markers.
5. Plain white peel-off stickers (used to identify injured staff at the emergency site).
6. List of (electronically accessible) phone numbers for various offices and satellite company locations, local law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, fire department and other agencies that need to know of the crisis. Include cell phone numbers and email addresses on this list. Fax lines and emails at major offices should also be included.
7. List of cell and beeper numbers for staff.
8. Local phone directory with email addresses.
9. Current staff directory.
10. Floor plans showing locations of all exits, telephones and wall jacks, computers, and other devices that may be useful in communication during an emergency.
11. Fully charged battery-operated bullhorn.
12. Local street and zone maps.
13. For all trips from the site, a map showing the most direct and safest routes to be traveled to and from the destination. (For GPS navigation purposes, all addresses should be complete with street number and zip code.)

cont.

PR Play 14-11 continued

14. List of assigned roles for personnel.
15. Summary of information that can be made public during an emergency. Include Freedom of Information Act summary, company policy and others.
16. List of professional and community contacts for organizing a crisis care team of counselors, clergy and others.
17. Laptop computers and tablets (iPad®) with fresh batteries.

- ***Divert*** – a combination of *deflect* and *distract*. It is both shifting blame and turning attention away from the issue(s) at hand (not a responsible approach). (Turner Broadcasting System's Cartoon Network® – either planned or unintentional – attempted to *divert* attention when its marketing campaign for the *Adult Swim* show "Aqua Teen Hunger Force" caused a massive panic in Boston – LED signs of Ignignot and Err [Mooninite Marauders characters from the show] were mistaken as explosive devices. Boston authorities may have overreacted when it shut down part of the city and detonated the cartoon publicity devices, but TBS and its Cartoon Network® should have taken immediate and *direct* responsibility for guerilla marketing that went bad and caused "panic.")

PR Play 14-12
An Award-Winning Crisis Communication Plan

To view the award-winning plan, "Philadelphia Phillies – A Crisis Communication Plan Commissioned by *Courier-Post*" go to www.larrylitwin.com and click on Student Resources, Classroom Handouts, No. 49. Plans use a decimal system for easy reference. The plan earned the 2006 Pepperpot Award from the Philadelphia chapter of the Public Relations Society of America for Crisis Communication and the Frank X. Long Achievement Award for "excellence in writing and creativity."

- ***Dodge*** – avoid answering questions or use of excuses (not always truthful).

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association suggests that the chief spokesperson must do his or her homework. The spokesperson must be prepared and knowledgeable about the situation.

Accessibility is important. Reporters must be able to contact the so-called "point person." Editors and reporters have been heard to complain that key personnel are not available when bad news breaks. Remember, if you want your strategic message heard, you have to say or write it.

Promises made to the media must be kept. But don't allow reporters to push you into a corner or into easy solutions. Many times, reporters and their editors are looking for "quick-fix" answers. Remember though, no matter the medium, there are deadlines.

The spokesperson is expected to act responsibly. It is recommended that legal advice be readily at hand.

If you don't have the answer to a question or are lacking some information, say so. Promise to get whatever is needed and provide it as soon as you can.

While much of the information the spokesperson is disseminating is verbal, it is advised to back it up with written copy. In all cases, avoid jargon that might be pertinent to a particular industry or profession. Communicate in terms that everyone can understand.

If there is incorrect information floating, be ready to respond. But first, ask this question: "Should a response be made?" If resources permit, attempt to locate the primary source of this incorrect information or rumor.

Other Suggestions

As you prepare for the worst, hoping it never happens, follow the advice of *BusinessWeek* magazine: "Be visible, be sympathetic, be responsible." Gov. Schweiker (coal mine crisis) was all three. He also followed the magazine's other suggestions: "Don't delay, don't deny, don't hope it will go away."

Remember to keep your firm or organization's website current. Get information on it rapidly. In fact, many firms have what they refer to as "dark sites" – available only in the event of a crisis or some other emergency. It links from the main website. Remember too, if there is no "new" news, say it on the website. Include the date and time of the latest update.

Dealing With the Media When a Crisis Strikes

One instance in our business or private lives when you cannot ignore the presence of the media is during a time of crisis. When a crisis hits, in a matter of seconds, it can forever change the course of your business – or someone's life.

In the moments and days following a crisis, the media will be a part of your life – visiting your facility, talking to employees, neighbors, government officials, self-proclaimed "experts" and more importantly, wanting to talk to you. Yes, you, the public relations practitioner – the center of the crisis. Should you grant an interview? Yes. All of the people involved in the situation will present their points of view. This is your opportunity to tell the story as you see it.

Here are some tips from Peter J. McCarthy, vice president, public affairs, Elf Atochem North America, Inc. They are designed to help you manage the crisis:

- Boil down your message to no more than two or three points and make certain you deliver those points no matter what else the reporter wants to talk about. You have every bit as much right as the reporter to set the agenda and terms of the interview.
- A word of caution – the reporter is not your friend. He or she is a professional who, no matter how personally charming, will get all points of view into the story. So don't feel betrayed when that "nice guy" reporter also presents your opponent's point of view – that's his or her job.
- Your job is to use the interview as an opportunity to hammer home – simply, briefly and repeatedly – those messages that you believe are important for your audience to understand.
- One last thing – in every relationship someone is in charge. During the interview, make certain the public relations practitioner is in charge. During a time of crisis, damage control is the reason for giving the interview. Making certain that you are in control maximizes the likelihood of successful damage control.

The message is simple: Be prepared; anticipate the crisis; know your message; and most importantly ask yourself, "Who is in charge here?"

Peter J. McCarthy – Vice President – Public Affairs
Elf Atochem North America, Inc.
The Philadelphia Inquirer/Feb. 24, 1997

PR Play 14-13
Bernstein's 10 Steps of Crisis Communication

"Crisis communication's function is to preserve the value of the brand. That's accomplished by minimizing the impact of the crisis."

1. Identify your crisis communication team
2. Identify spokesperson
3. Train spokesperson
4. Establish communication protocol (notification systems)
5. Identify and know your stakeholders
6. Anticipate crises
7. Develop holding statements (quick response)
8. Assess the crisis situation
9. Identify key messages
10. Riding out the storm

Jonathan Bernstein – Bernstein Crisis Management LLC – www.bernsteincrisismanagement.com

Anne Klein Communications Group, strategic counselors, takes the guesswork out of what should be said during a crisis:

1. **Description of the general nature of the incident**, i.e., fire, injury, lawsuit, etc.
2. **Time of occurrence**.
3. **Location and description of the facility or geographic area involved**. Supply maps and diagrams of the site, if they are available.
4. **Whether the incident** (e.g., fire) **has been controlled**. This description should be in general lay terms. Don't go into technical details that might lead to confusion on the part of the media and the public.
5. **Policies**, particularly safety and training – already adopted or approved.
6. **Corrective measures being taken at present** and, if you know for sure, what will be done in the long term. Example: "The fire department has the blaze under control. Everyone has been evacuated from the building. While the damage is being repaired, we will move our operations from this site to another location."

PR Play 14-14

Jack Welch's Five Stages of Crisis Management

1. **Denial** – Denial in the face of disaster is human. It is the main and immediate emotion people feel at the receiving end of any really bad news. That doesn't excuse any official from not reacting quickly and staying "in front of the story." Rather than denial, the reaction should be forthright, calm, fierce and bold.
2. **Containment** – In companies and other organizations, containment usually plays out with leaders trying to keep the "matter" quiet – a total waste of energy. All problems, and especially messy ones, eventually get out and explode.
3. **Shame-mongering** – This is a period in which all stakeholders fight to get their side of the story told, with themselves as the heroes at the center.
4. **Blood on the floor** – Too many times, officials believe that someone has to pay for the crisis with his or her head.
5. **Galvanizing effect** – The fifth and final part of the pattern – the best part – is the awareness raised by a crisis.

Jack Welch – Former Chairman and CEO – General Electric©

7. **Emergency officials on the scene**, including fire, police, highway transportation department.
8. **Presence or absence of injuries**, but do not give names of individuals involved.
9. **Name(s) of hospitals being used** in case of injury.
10. **Identify organization officials coming to the scene** (in general, by type or title rather than by name). The key message is to express management concern.
11. **Details of the media briefing process, time and place of the next update and/or continuing media briefings.**
12. **Name and phone number of an organization official to contact for further information.**

PR Play 14-15

Bill Jones' 10 Commandments of Crisis Communication

1. *Perception is reality.* If your audience thinks it is, it is.
2. *Response is control*. The community wants access to information, and no crisis is unmanageable if you give clear, cool facts.
3. *Information is power.*
4. *Credibility is survival.*
5. *Body language is crucial.* If you behave like you have something to hide, people will think that you do.
6. *Calmness is essential.* Unflappability is your best asset. Always act knowledgeable and calm.
7. *Give a confession.* The public and the media want a confession; so don't be afraid to admit mistakes.
8. *Tell the franchise what happened.* It is in the best interest of the community to keep them informed.
9. *Preparation is 99% of success.*
10. *Out of every crisis comes the chance to "build a better mousetrap."* From every crisis there are major lessons to be learned.
11. *Pray like hell that you never have to handle numbers 1 through 10!*

Here are some of Klein's **"Important DON'Ts in Dealing With the Media" during a crisis:**

1. **Do not speculate about anything**.
2. **Do not give out unconfirmed facts.** Give only the facts you are sure of until further information can be obtained.
3. **Do not speculate on the potential impact of the incident** on employees, neighbors, the community-at-large, etc., unless you know, for sure.
4. **Do not estimate on dollar figures for damage that occurred.**
5. **Do not release the names of anyone injured or killed until family members have been notified.**
6. **Do not give out any medical reports on condition(s) of the injured.** This is the responsibility of the attending physician or hospital spokesperson and is restricted by the federal medical privacy laws outlined in HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).
7. **Do not assume liability for the incident or guess how the incident occurred.**

8. **Do not ever respond to a question with "No comment."** It is never an acceptable answer. Say you don't know if you are unsure of the answer or that you will put reporters in touch with someone who can answer their questions. If a question requires an answer that you feel is proprietary to the organization or would violate confidentiality, just explain that fact.
9. **Do not speak "off the record," "not for attribution" or "on deep background."** This is an area of high risk, and it is best not to venture there. (See Chapter 9.)
10. **Do not get angry with a reporter or raise your voice.**

Anne Klein and others who have been successful in dealing with the media during crises agree on the importance of remaining calm. Take time to compose yourself and craft your message as you formulate your answers. Remember, you are a professional doing your best to be helpful. Practice the highest ethical standards. Succinctly, you want to be open, honest, thorough and valid (relevant) in your responses and dissemination of information. Above all, never lie to a reporter, but do not answer a question if you don't have the answer and don't offer unsolicited information unless it is to your benefit.

Klein recommends you notify the media before they contact you when the community is in danger; your organization's operations are affected; if having the media first learn about the situation from someone else would damage your organization's image or credibility; a good number of employees know or could possibly know about the situation; or if there are regulatory infractions that would embarrass your organization if the media learned about them in some other way.

Crisis Communications Since 9/11: Where Do We Stand Now?

Op-ed submitted by Howard J. Rubenstein, *Founder, Rubenstein Associates* – New York

First published on Sept. 11, 2006, and reprinted from "Expert Recommendations" – *Crisis Communication Plan – Philadelphia Phillies*

On September 11, 2001 a few hate-filled individuals changed history for millions by destroying the World Trade Center (owned and operated by my longtime client, Larry Silverstein). Not only the larger sweep of history, but also the mindset of millions of individual Americans was forever transformed.

This change directly affects my approach to public relations. No longer can we wait in relative security until there's a new crisis. Instead, public relations professionals have to begin advising clients on how to anticipate and prepare for a crisis that doesn't yet exist — and that could take any number of forms, including terrorism, pandemics and economic downturn. We now need to be more serious and attentive than ever before. This transformation increases the value of having ready at hand a list of "DO's" and "DON'Ts" for meeting a crisis of any type.

First off, when you see early signs of a brewing crisis, take them seriously. These signs might take various forms: information from an outside source, warnings from whistleblowers or disgruntled employees within a company, media calls, inquiries from government entities, etc. Whatever form they take, don't ever assume they'll go away if you avoid them. To the contrary, be as proactive as possible.

In other words, prepare in advance. Put together a crisis team composed of management, legal personnel, communications experts and human resources professionals. Designate one or two people who will respond to media calls. Once the team is together, ask yourselves, "What's the right thing to do?" rather than, "What do we say?" Gather all the facts you can and identify the audiences you want to communicate with. These could include readers, public officials, stockholders, employees, the general public, etc. Respond quickly and, most important, accurately to all queries. Set the ground rules with reporters before you talk and, wherever possible, prepare written responses rather than winging it. But get the bad news out quickly – avoid "water torture."

What you don't want to do is lie, adopt a bunker mentality, automatically say "no comment" (doing so implies guilt) or make up answers. Never fight with reporters or gossip with them. Remember: The reporter has the last word in print and gossip almost always gets out.

If you put together your own aggressive crisis communications plan along the above lines, you'll have a good chance of minimizing the damage of negative news. An Oxford University study found that corporations that managed crises effectively enhanced their stock prices while those that handled the crisis poorly damaged them.

Sept. 11 (2001) got public relations professionals thinking about survival in a whole new way. You could say that because of the larger crisis in which the world is locked right now, we have more respon-

> sibility than ever before to manage those crises that can be controlled as professionally and effectively as possible. Public relations has become a key back-up system, like an emergency generator, that more and more people realize they can't do without.

Howard Rubenstein founded Rubenstein Associates in 1954. The agency has an extensive list of more than 450 clients, including the New York Yankees, The New York Post, the Guggenheim Museum, BMW, the Mt. Sinai/NYU Health System, the Bowery Mission, Rockefeller Center, Columbia University and the Empire State Building.

EXERCISES

PR Challenges 14-1 and 14-2

Below is one, all encompassing challenge fashioned after those that too many institutions have had to face in recent years:

How would *you* handle the following?

You are strategic communication director for a private college in a small Iowa town. The college has an enrollment of 7,000 students in a town with a population of 8,000. The 105-year-old Fairfield College had been planning an expansion – possibly opening a satellite college on the east coast.

As luck would have it, Fairfield College appeared to hit the jackpot. A graduate offered to contribute $150 million to the college. The only catch – the school's new convocation center be named after her. College President S. William Kramer calls you (the strategic counselor) into a one-on-one meeting for advice. During that meeting, Dr. Kramer informs you naming the new convocation center after Louise Roberts seems hardly enough. He proposes that Fairfield College become Roberts College of Iowa – with one goal in mind – becoming a nationally, if not, internationally known university.

a) Your assignment is to develop a "plan" with a strategic message or two on how the contribution will be handled and announced.

Some issues to keep in mind:

- Audiences
  1. Internal
  2. External
  3."Townies"
  4. Alumni

- Tradition of name
- Rebranding plus brand expansion
- How do you propose Dr. Kramer respond to the "townies" who have given long-time personal and financial support to the college that carries the local name?

This just in…

After all is said and done, the college has the money. It has changed its name, built a new convention center and named it and the college, which became a university, after Dr. Roberts.

However, about three years after all of this was done, it becomes known that Dr. Roberts earned 10s of millions of dollars, including what she gave for the endowment, through illicit means. She is found guilty and sentenced to prison.

b) As strategic counselor, what advice do you give Dr. Kramer about the money in the endowment, about the name change and the university's overall image?