The Media and You

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Norm Hartman
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Introduction

"Perception is all there is."
-Tom Peters

It doesn’t matter who you are, what you do or how you see yourself. What matters is how others see you, and much of their image of you and your organization is formed by media accounts.

This book is designed to help you understand how to deal more effectively with the media — to get your story out so that you are represented in a positive way, whether you are introducing a new product or service, are in the middle of a crisis, or are simply a casual participant in a news event. It is designed to help you achieve balanced coverage in every situation involving the media.

“What’s so different about talking to a reporter?” you say. “I talk to people every day.” It boils down to this: If you talk to media using the communication tools you’ve used all your life, there is a very good chance you will make a mistake — perhaps a serious one.

Journalists simply are not looking for what most people deliver, nor do they want it in the format in which we deliver it. Dealing with the media is one of the most counterintuitive processes there is. It defies logic, the communications conventions we’ve learned and practiced for years and the many of the rules of common sense by which we all live.

To further complicate matters, print interviews should be handled differently than radio and television interviews. Print and broadcast reporters have different needs, and successful interviewees accommodate that. Television reaches larger audiences and those audiences make critical judgments based on non-verbal communications — gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice.

The daily newspaper remains the foundation of the press in America. It is where most news stories start, it often sets the tone for television coverage and its clips will be around long after the broadcast story is forgotten.

I want to demystify the media for you — to give you a set of tools you can use to communicate your message in a way that is compelling and quotable no matter what the reporter wants. If you use these tools, you will find you can communicate effectively and deliver your message to critical audiences.

The Media

"Who are those guys?"
-Butch Cassidy (to Sundance Kid)

Why do we fear reporters so much? After all, they’re people who have the same concerns, worries, joys and interests as we. Yet when we get a call from a reporter, work stops and we worry about what might be written or broadcast about us. Who are those media people and what are they up to?

Reporters are driven by many forces. They compete among themselves for stories and for space. Every reporter would like to see his or her byline on the front page or their story as the lead in the broadcast. They like recognition for their work. The print reporter’s fondest desire is a Pulitzer and a job at the New York Times. Most broadcast reporters aspire to a network foreign correspondent’s slot or a place at the anchor desk. You may be little more than a rung on their career ladder.

Editors and publishers have both economic and journalistic incentives. Without profits, no newspaper, magazine or broadcast station can survive. If more people buy their publication or watch their broadcast, owners and managers can boost advertising rates and make more money for their investors. Economic considerations can and do color what they report and how they report it.

Reporters want a good story, one that includes information that is new — different from the way things were yesterday — and that has meaning, interest or significance to their reader or listener. They like conflict, criticism and controversy. Colorful quotes help reporters bring life to their stories. They’d rather have a local angle if it’s available and bad news is always more compelling than good news. Print reporters are interested in ideas, concepts, trends and theories while television reporters prefer stories involving events and activities. Pocketbook and health issues are universally appealing. Most often the reporter does not write headlines or teases.

What they don’t want. The press release about your millionth milestone or your new deputy director of fisheries, a news conference about your record-breaking contribution to United Way, the party for the employee who is celebrating 20 years or the director’s husband’s or wife’s favorite charity’s fund drive is not likely to make even the back page of tomorrow’s fishwrap.

Reporters aren’t interested in receiving an education about your story. They are harried, with dozens of contacts to make and tight deadlines ahead. You are a means to their end, and they want just enough information to validate and complete the story — and get it past their editor — before the deadline.
What They Want

“Four hostile newspapers are more to be feared than a thousand bayonets.”
- Napoleon

All reporters are not looking for the same information. Think about who they are writing for – their audience. What does that audience want? Readers of the Wall Street Journal are looking for different information than readers of technical or professional publications such as New England Journal of Medicine. Readers of the Los Angeles Times have a different set of expectations than those who read the National Enquirer. What are they looking for?

In general, editors for most publications will ask these questions to qualify a story:

- What’s new and different than it was yesterday?
- What’s the significance? (So what? Is it news, a trend, a personality?)
- How will this impact my readers/viewers/listeners? (Do they care?)
- How will this help them do something better tomorrow? (What’s in it for me?)

Here are some characteristics of the various media. Use this information to help you shape your messages to the particular medium – and audience – you want to reach.

**National Daily Newspapers** (USA Today, Wall Street Journal): USA Today focuses primarily on technology, showbiz, sports and savvy-traveler matters and a healthy dose of relatively short stories to help keep abreast of world, national, entertainment and sports news. The Wall Street Journal sticks to the business side. Front page and feature stories focus on trends, with inside stories aimed at investors. Some technical talk is OK with WSJ, but be sure the reporter is clear on meaning.

**Regional Daily Newspapers** (Dallas Morning News, Seattle Times, etc): A recent Columbia Journalism Review study found that three narrative frames, conflict, winners and losers and revelation of wrongdoing account for about one third of all newspaper stories. Other topics include mystery, criticism, prominence, drama, perspective, pocketbook and health. When offering stories to large papers, address your message to the typical middle-aged, college educated person who might be chatting about your organization while in a car pool or at the water cooler. Be prepared to provide lots of information and some good quotes. Dailies can be adversarial and your advertising budget won’t influence their coverage. Avoid technobabble.

**Weekly (Community) Newspapers:** These newspapers compete with the regional dailies for readers and advertising revenue. They tend to be less adversarial than their big city cousins, with greater emphasis on local news, for which they have a large appetite. In many cases they are understaffed, so will welcome stories you’ve written about employees, community involvement, etc. Fold corporate image messages in to these human interest stories. These publications know who their advertisers are.
Remember that newspapers are a permanent historic record. Reporters and others access previous articles as a starting point in research for other stories and causes. Unlike broadcast stories, they hang on bulletin boards and are shuttled around the Internet. In other words, they last forever. Often they set the tone for broadcast media coverage of an issue.

**Television News:** Local television news remains the primary source of news in the American household, although its audiences are shifting away. It tends to favor breaking news stories with highly visual elements, activities, noise, events, and drama, to the exclusion of stories about ideas, concepts, theories and trends. Sound bites run 6-10 seconds — about 20-30 words.

**Cable News (CNBC, CNN, ESPN and Fox etc.):** Their spotlight is on current and developing news stories with wide impact, business and sports events. Business channels report about new products, initial public offerings, mergers, acquisitions and advice that will help investors. Their audience is business-savvy and can digest ordinary financial and technical terminology. CNN and Fox cover major developing stories, nationwide trends and human interest items. Messages should focus on new products, services, good works, success stories and their benefit to the consumer or the investor.

**Radio News:** Radio (with the exception of National Public Radio) offers headline news focusing on breaking stories and little else. Anything more than a couple of hours old is "old news" and of little interest. Sound bites are very short.

**Consumer Publications:** Consumer and computer magazines focus on helping make life easier and more productive for the reader. Articles offer tips, comparisons, new product information and how-to features. Messages should emphasize how you are making things simpler and better for the reader.

**News Magazines (Time, Business Week, Money etc.):** tend to provide either long, detailed stories about popular trends or short pieces offering something of intrinsic value to the reader (pocketbook, health, education, investments). Long stories may quote and identify you. Short stories probably won’t. It is unlikely you’ll be the focus of a story in a national magazine unless you’re the likes of General Motors, Microsoft, Kaiser Permanente, the CDC or NASA. More likely, you’ll be one of several of your genre to be featured. Messages should differentiate you from your competitors.

**Professional & Technical Publications:** You can often bring your technical language – acronyms and jargon – to interviews with technical writers. (Leave it at the office for all other publications.) They’re going to want more information, including supporting documents, charts, graphs, illustrations, diagrams, photos, etc. These are the plankton of the media. Reporters for popular publications (i.e., WSJ, NY and LA Times) read these publications and pick story ideas from them.
The Internet is a powerful and rapidly growing force in the media picture. It can serve as a primary source of information for customers, friends, employees and the media. If you are involved in a crisis, use the Internet to provide frequently updated information to your many audiences. (The airlines and others have done this very effectively.) The Internet provides a place where you can post your message to a worldwide audience, including the popular media, and know it is delivered as you sent it. Radio, television and newspapers monitor the Internet and use it as a source of information, both current and historic. A 2006 survey the Pew Research Center for People and the Press* showed a dramatic decline in newspaper readership and television viewership since 1993, and indicated that 31% of people go online for news three or more days per week.

Dealing with online reporters and bloggers. Technorati’s (technorati.com) State of the Blogosphere tracked more than 57,000,000 blogs in October, 2006, with 100,000+ created each day. Politicians are using blogs to announce, corporations are using them to communicate with customers, and ordinary citizens are using them just to be heard. With this in mind, every organization should have a policy for handling online reporters. You may elect to respond to reporters from prestige publications (i.e., the Wall Street Journal, the Chicago Tribune) and decline those with little strategic value. Before you respond, check their sites to evaluate the impact and the quality of coverage. Do you want to be included? Will your absence result in significant damage? Your information is published worldwide within minutes, so be sure what you are saying is public. Bloggers can spread inaccurate or critical information that may need responses. Consider the source before deciding whether to react. And check periodically to see what the Internet is saying about you. At minimum, Google yourself weekly and check for blogs on technorati.com periodically.

There are no news cycles or fixed deadlines on the Internet. Deadlines occur around the clock, and the life of a web story is very short. But remember that other media check the web for story ideas, so be prepared to receive calls from others.

If you plan on pitching your story to online reporters, be familiar with their sites. Know who covers what, and don’t send posts (i.e., new management appointments) or other stories to sites that don’t use them. Be certain your story is newsworthy, then put the news in the first sentence — using e-mail and no attachments — and send to the right person. Don’t annoy editors with follow-up e-mails or phone calls.

It’s a good idea to post your press releases (with a contact name and phone/e-mail) on your website. These will provide a valuable resource for journalists and others who are researching your company, and may generate news stories.

What about prior review of stories involving me? Don’t ask.
The most you’ll ever be granted is the opportunity to review how you are quoted or accuracy of facts, and nothing more. That usually occurs only in long-lead publications. Reporters facing the grind of daily deadlines barely have time to get their stories put together, much less to seek approval of quotes. Asking to review the story before publication just lets the reporter know how little you know about dealing with the media.

Interview Survival

“Never explain. Your friends do not need it and your enemies will not believe you anyway.”
—Elbert Hubbard

Interviews don’t begin when the reporter asks you the first question. They start with the first telephone contact. **Before you answer any question,** find out what the reporter is up to. If you have a media department, it’s their duty to prepare briefing information for you. It should include background on the reporter (previous stories about you or the subject of the interview, level of knowledge, attitude, biases, etc.), anticipated questions, framework for answers, messages, etc.

**Prior to the interview, know the nature of the story, what specific information the reporter wants, who else the reporter is talking to, what other information the reporter has seen and the deadline.**

**If you’re doing a telephone interview for print or radio,** keep your key points in front of you. Many people find it is a good idea to stand up during telephone interviews—that can raise their energy level and keep them more alert.

**For print interviews,** have your key point(s) on a sheet of paper or an index card as a reminder to stay on track. Have other factual information, including supplementary materials, handy in case you need to refer to them.

**Television interviews** need to be carefully planned. Memorize your key point, rehearse it, and check your appearance (hair, wardrobe) before you go on. Don’t use notes. **Eye contact is with the reporter, not the camera,** unless no reporter is present and you are on an electronic talkback with questions coming from the studio (i.e., Ted Koppel’s “Nightline” program with remote guests).

**Anticipate the three toughest questions** and prepare answers. Even if the questions don’t come up, you’ll be more confident and better prepared.

Some other dos and don’ts for media interviews:

**DO**
- Have your own message
- Keep answers short
- Speak only for your organization
- Speak in sound bites
- Be conscious of body language
- Stop talking when you’ve answered
- Treat the reporter with respect
- Listen carefully to every question

**DON’T**
- Feel you have to answer every question
- Speculate, conjecture or guess
- Go “off the record” (under any conditions)
- Concede a point to get rid of it
- Use jargon, acronyms and technical terms
- Talk about your competition
- Regard the reporter as your friend
- Feel you have to please the reporter
Pause before answering. Think about what you're going to say. If you are uncertain about the question, ask for clarification. If the question is vague, ask for definition. "I'm not sure how you define fair." Buy some time by asking the reporter to repeat or rephrase the question.*

"No comment" is never an appropriate answer. (See Appendix E.) If you can't answer, explain why. There are four cases in which you can know the answer and generally not give it without penalty. They are:

- Proprietary and competitive info (i.e., revenues, number of customers, treatments)
- Matters in which your lawyer has advised you not to comment
- Issues involving confidential customer, patient or vendor relationships
- Personnel matters

When invoking one of these, explain that you cannot answer because it involves proprietary/legal/patient or personnel information.

"Off the record" is a somewhat greater risk than jumping into a pool of quicksand infested with poisonous snakes. If a reporter says, "Just off the record, can you tell me..." a good response is, "I'm not going to say anything you can't print or broadcast." This will produce fewer sleepless nights - and fewer headlines. (In rare cases, it may be useful to include reporters in confidential discussions or meetings, i.e., when they are doing an in-depth profile on an executive, etc).

Interviews don't end when the reporter puts away the pencil and paper or the camera is apparently turned off. Nor do they end when the reporter and camera leave the premises. The interview ends when the story is published or broadcast.

Avoid repeating a reporter's false allegation or a negative statement. For example, if a reporter were to ask, "Don't you think your organization was negligent when you took that action?" avoid using the word negligent in your response. (Richard Nixon's famous line, "I am not a crook," is remembered more than thirty years later.) When asked about a proposed rate increase, a California utility spokesman answered, "We're not pulling a fast one." That earned a prominent and deserved quote in the San Francisco Chronicle.

Body Talk

"The eyes of men converse as much as their tongues, with the advantage that the ocular dialect needs no dictionary, but is understood the world over."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

No matter what you say, how you say it will carry as much or more weight—sometimes much more. Studies tell us that the words we speak account for a much smaller part of the message than our tone of voice, gestures and facial expressions. UCLA professor Albert Mehrabian, whose definitive studies on non-verbal communication are described in his book "Silent Messages," believes that in some circumstances, less than ten percent of what we communicate comes through the words we speak.¹

Yet we agonize for hours over our words, and maybe think only as the camera starts rolling that we should have combed our hair or reread that page on eye contact. Assuming Mehrabian is correct, the words we have worked so hard to fashion will make little difference if our eye contact is erratic or we demonstrate some other affectation that draws attention away from the message or reveals nervousness or worry.

This applies for television and other media. Radio conveys our tone of voice, from which listeners can detect nervousness or hesitancy. Print reporters quickly pick up on nervousness or other signs that indicate we may be holding back or equivocating.

Here are some tips for appearing credible and having your message accepted by the audience:

- **Look the reporter in the eye** when first meeting, when he or she is asking questions and when you’re answering
- **Smile** and keep your energy level high. High energy enhances your credibility
- **Lean in** to the interview. Engage the reporter by giving full attention
- Sit on the front third of the chair—especially in television interviews
- Keep your hands away from your face
- During television interviews, **maintain steady eye contact** during questions and answers. A smile shows that you are confident about what you are saying.

¹ Mehrabian, Albert, "Silent Messages," Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont, CA, 1971. (No longer in print.) Dr. Mehrabian believes that when a message is inconsistent, that is, when there are non-verbal signals that do not reconcile with our words (i.e., eye dart, nervous voice), the receiver’s beliefs or likings will tend to be with facial expressions (55%), tone of voice (38%) and words (7%).
Your Message

"The medium is the message."
-Marshall McLuhan

McLuhan’s comment aside, the content of media communication is still important. For most people, the idea of a media interview is, “I’m going to let the reporter assault me with a bunch of tough questions and I just hope I can survive and keep my job.” We sometimes forget that every media interview presents an opportunity to deliver a message, to tell our story or to make some key points about the good things we are doing. But we must be ready to do this.

Before your interview — but after you’ve determined the subject of the story, the line of questioning, who else is being interviewed, probable questions, etc.,— you should develop your own message(s) relating to the situation.

What should you talk about? After all, the reporter is the one who will determine the topic, right? Right and wrong. Look at the difference between these two answers to the same question:

**Reporter:** Ms. Smith, why is it taking you so long to get your new program underway?
**Ms. Smith:** We’ve run in to some unexpected conflicts and have been locating experts to help us solve them, but it’s going to take a little longer than we expected.

**OR**

**Reporter:** Ms. Smith, why is it taking you so long to get your new program underway?
**Ms. Smith:** We have had some unexpected program conflicts. It’s important to note, though, that our department policy is very clear. It says we simply will not start a new program until we are completely satisfied that it will work as we expect it to. We owe the taxpayers the very best, and that’s what we intend to deliver.

In the second case the interviewee acknowledged the reporter’s question with a brief answer — that would probably satisfy the reporter, then bridged to a message that turned into a commercial for her department’s quality control. The first answer probably would not have drawn a single new supporter. The second had a far better chance.

Thus, it is critical to take some time to develop a message that is pertinent to each interview situation. Be sure it is positive, that it speaks to initiatives you’ve taken, efforts to make the world a better place to live. Defensive messages don’t work.

Avoid “hollowspeak.” If you claim you have the most effective program, offer third party validation, data or statistics to support your claim.
How do you determine what your message should be?

**Identify your audience.** Remember that the reporter represents your audience, and is there to ask questions on their behalf. If you're talking to a reporter for a computer magazine, you're really talking to people who buy computers, software, peripherals, etc.

On the other hand, if you are talking to a local television reporter, he or she represents a very broad audience — some of whom are computer users, and some of whom are not. Keep your message simple.

Some other tips for developing effective messages and making them compelling and quotable:

**Keep messages short.** Reporters don’t like long messages because they don’t fit in news stories. That’s because audiences of popular media aren’t interested in long, complex messages. The average sound bite today is about six to seven seconds. Two sentences.

**Address audience interests.** Audiences don’t care about your problems. They care about their own. Tell them what you are doing to make their lives easier. Speak to their WIIFM (What’s In It For Me?)

**Use tools to communicate.**
- Anecdotes — stories are among the most powerful persuaders
- Real world examples — about others who have used the product or service
- Analogies — explain complex issues, relate known to unknown and vice versa
- Colorful and bold words — *Smashing* victory, *jaw-dropping* product
- Graphic imagery — Draw word pictures to involve the audience
- Metaphor, cliché — As long as it’s not too trite, give it a try
- Emotion — *Be outraged, shocked, satisfied, sickened*

**Translate FEATURES to BENEFITS.** A feature describes a product or service. A benefit addresses what the user will gain. Take the time to make the bridge so that you leave no doubt in the mind of the audience. Here are a few examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Power brakes, power steering, air bags</td>
<td>Safe, comfortable and easy to drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.80Ghz processor and 80GB hard drive</td>
<td>Programs load quickly, with lots of room for additional applications and data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadband communication</td>
<td>Surf the Internet, download files and e-mail with amazing speed, and it's always ready</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventive medicine</td>
<td>We're interested in keeping you healthy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Sound (Ink) Bite

"Everybody gets so much information all day long that they lose their common sense."

- Gertrude Stein

Like it or not, the sound/ink bite is the basic currency of American journalism. The sound bite or quote may be the only evidence the audience will have that you had a role in the story. If it is good, you look fine. If it is not, you may look like a buffoon despite the fact that everything else you said during the interview was perfect.

Brief sound bites authenticate, add dimension or humanize the story. In many cases, the reporter will not choose the most important thing you said but instead will use the bite that shows emotion, adds color or offers a unique perspective. That choice may not cast you in the most flattering light.

Anything you say can become a sound bite or quote.
You can manage that by being extremely careful. Never utter anything that is likely to bring shame or embarrassment upon you or your organization. If the reporter repeats the question, it may be because you’re not giving the answer he or she wants. Don’t let the reporter force you to say something you don’t want to say. Stick by your guns – have a good message, and above all, go into the interview with some prepared quotes and sound bites.

According to the Media Studies Center in New York, the average sound bite on network television in 1999 was 6.5 seconds – 21 words. You don’t have much time, so with that in mind, here’s a formula that will help you be concise and quotable:

**Conclusion**
*Example:*
> "We believe this product is safe." (6 words)

**Evidence**
*Example:*
> "We’ve thoroughly tested it in our labs." (7 words)

**Meaning**
*Example:*
> "So it’s safe in the home around children and pets." (10 words) (Total = 23 words.)

When you’ve done this, STOP TALKING!
Question: "Why can't your department guarantee that your Internet data is secure?"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Print Answer</th>
<th>Sound Bite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We know security and privacy are very important. We have initiated a new program to test our security.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We know security and privacy are very important to everybody.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's important to remember that...&quot; (or) &quot;To address that concern...&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;It's important to remember...&quot; (or) &quot;To address that concern...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...our department has put in place the very best Internet security available today. We have every confidence that our data can be accessed only by authorized persons. (E) We've invested more than $20 million in new security software this year, and we have hired four security managers, including a former FBI agent. (M) As you can clearly see, our clients can be certain their confidential information will be safe with us.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;...our department has the very best Internet security available today. (E) We've invested more than $20 million in new software this year. (M) That means our clients can be certain their confidential information will be safe with us.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Talking Technical When Your Audience Isn't

"The Internet is the most important single development in the history of human communication since the invention of call waiting."

-Dave Barry

Engineers, scientists and technical people are being thrust into the spotlight more and more as high tech companies realize that the media really want to talk to the people who are on the front lines of the product or service. If you're cast in this role, here are some tips to make your presentation more understandable.

1. **Determine how much the audience knows** about technology before you go. Most audiences don't want an education. They just want a tip, a hint or some specific bit of information. If you're talking to a high-tech journal, you may be able to use much of your jargon. Otherwise, it's best to keep it at or just below the level of the audience.

2. **Don't be a techno-snob.** When you talk down to an audience, you turn them off. Phrases such as, "As you should know..." or "It's quite obvious..." are condescending. Remember, there was a time when you didn't understand this stuff, either.

3. **Leave your jargon, acronyms and government terms in the office.** Even if the reporter seems to understand them (he or she may not be clear on them), it is unlikely the audience will. But neither of them is likely to admit it. If you must use technical terms, be prepared to offer explanations.

4. **Showing is better than telling.** A good simple illustration can be better than thousands of words when trying to explain complex technical concepts. A demonstration using presentation software, multimedia tools, equipment and actual examples of technology can be very memorable.

5. **Offer verbal illustrations.** Analogies, metaphors and anecdotes are powerful tools. Use them, but be sure they're relevant to your audience.

6. **Relax and have fun.** Open with a story or anecdote that shows you recognize the audience may have trepidations about your presentation.
Crisis Communication

"In moments of crisis, the initiative passes to those who are best prepared."

-Morton C. Blackwell

An organization’s name and reputation are its most precious assets. Yet many do little to protect against the media frenzy that will arise out of a crisis. They spend untold dollars on fire and accident insurance, forgetting that a rebuilt plant will have little value if the organization’s reputation is gone. The most important insurance an organization can have is an up-to-date crisis plan, a team trained to implement it on short notice, and spokespersons who can handle the media and public firestorm if it becomes necessary. Assuming “it won’t happen here,” is as silly as betting against the sun rising tomorrow.

Crises generally come in two forms. A sudden crisis is often triggered by outside forces. Fires, floods, earthquakes and machinery malfunctions are examples. Once they occur, there is little time to do anything but try to control the damage and assure customers, vendors and the public that you have the situation under control.

Smoldering crises tend to arise from the inside. Harassment, embezzlement and discrimination cases can go on for years until they finally attract public attention. Often there is time to prepare, but many organizations mistakenly move to a state of denial, believing their “little problem” will never see the light of day.

What to do:

Conduct a crisis vulnerability audit. This can be done in a variety of ways. First review existing crisis plans to assure that all the organization’s operational entities are represented, that emergency contact information is centralized, that the plan addresses both internal and external audiences and that it is realistic.

A second type of audit assembles top management and asks these questions: 1) What are the worst things that could happen? 2) How likely are they? 3) What would be the impact if they did occur? Since you can’t possibly plan for every eventuality (it probably makes little sense to plan for an airplane crashing into your building unless you’re near the end of a runway) plan for those that would be most likely and most devastating. Your plan will be a framework for any crisis.

A third audit type produces more comprehensive information. It involves confidential in-depth interviews usually conducted by an experienced outside consultant. The interviews with top management, staff, employees, vendors, customers, friends, neighbors and other stakeholders, are designed to uncover hidden vulnerabilities before they become a problem and damage the organization’s reputation.
Plan for operations and communications in the event of a crisis. Top management must clearly define each person’s role and responsibilities. All members of the team must be clear on who does what, when and where. A major part of that is communication with the many groups that would be impacted by a crisis. These include employees and their families, neighbors, elected officials, union leaders, customers, vendors and the public (through the media).

The crisis communications team must clearly identify key community contacts and the channels to and from them. (Don’t forget that communication is a two-way process, and it is as important to listen as it is to speak during a crisis.) Lists of key contacts (media, community leaders, neighbors, etc.) should include every possible phone number and e-mail address and should be updated at least twice a year. Be sure your spokesperson has been trained.

Your organization’s website can be a primary source of information for all groups, however it must be quickly and continually updated. The major advantage it offers is that your information goes directly to those concerned, without the editorial filter applied by the media. (Indeed, the media may use online information to supplement their on-site coverage.) Airlines turn to the Internet immediately following a crash to quickly provide latest information directly on their home page.

Shut down unofficial communication channels. Now is the time to speak with one voice. You don’t want employees or others talking to friends, neighbors, etc., during the early phases of a crisis.

Communicate quickly, not waiting for all the information, or hoping the camera crews will just go away. You’ll probably never have all the information and reporters won’t drop the story because you’ve ignored them. Just the opposite. They’ll go somewhere else to get the information and that just might be irate neighbors, angry employees or former employees or eyewitnesses. They’ll do no favors.

Get ahead of the curve by quickly telling the media what you know and what you don’t know. If people have been injured or killed, express compassion for the victims and their families first and often. (Don’t offer names.) Reporters will want to know what happened, how, when, where and who was involved. Say, “This is what we know at this time...and this is what we don’t know.” If reporters ask why – and they likely will – tell them the cause is under investigation. Don’t speculate. Don’t blame, even if you think you know. Your lawyer will rightfully object if you accept or assign blame before you are absolutely certain.

Get the bad news out quickly. Offering it a piece at a time just brings your story up day after day. If there is bad news, get it out and get it over with.
**Update frequently.** When you have something new, call the media and get it out. Put it out in your terms rather than allowing your opponents to put it out in theirs.

**Monitor the media.** Watch, listen and read. If they get it wrong, correct quickly. An error can become a widely-reported “fact” very quickly, particularly on the Internet.

**Pay attention to the local media.** If it’s a big story, networks and national media may show up. When it’s over and they’re gone, you’re still going to have to live with the locals, and if you slighted them so that Aunt Minnie in East Bugville could see you on CNN, the locals won’t forget.

**Track your actions.** Keep a log of incoming calls and your actions so that if one station claims you responded to the competition before you called them back, you can answer.

**Your first crisis message** should follow this format:

1. Statement of empathy or compassion (must come within 30 seconds)
2. What we know now (who, what, when, where, how)
3. What we don’t know yet (why?)
4. The process (what we’re doing to get additional information)
5. Our commitment (when we expect to have updated information)
6. Where to go in the meantime (usually your website)

If people have been injured or killed, whether it appears to be your fault or not, your statement of empathy must precede everything else you say and it must come from the heart. Don’t read it. Look into the eyes of the audience (reporters) and express your feelings. If you don’t let people see this side of you, their ears will be closed to whatever else you say. We cannot overemphasize the importance of this process. Deliver the statement in the order above to minimize potential damage to your reputation and that of your organization.
Bioterrorism and Risk
Communication

"The essence of terrorism is that one never knows when is the wrong time and where is the wrong place."
-Carole Sheffield

Terrorism and bioterrorism are new problems for us and for journalists. Reporters know how to cover accidents, fires, earthquakes and the like because they’ve been doing it for years. Bioterrorism will be a new challenge. There probably will be no “incident scene,” and no heroic emergency personnel to interview. There are likely to be conflicting reports and perspectives, exaggerated accounts and reporters who have little knowledge of agents, symptoms, treatment and virulence. That will contribute to public confusion and fear. Combined with the stealthy nature of a chemical or biological attack and the tendency public agencies and experts have historically had to withhold information from the public until they were absolutely certain, a bad situation can be made even worse.

Quick release of the basic facts will be most critical. Withholding information only supports rumors and speculation and can contribute to public panic, which may be an objective of the terrorist. When given truthful information about a disaster, people tend to organize and help those directly impacted.

Reporters covering a chemical or biological attack will likely need all the help you can give them. Many reporters have little background in science and may not understand, for example, the difference between a chemical and a biological agent, a virus and a bacterium. Don’t assume they do.

With no “crash scene” the media will be scrambling to find experts who can help viewers and readers understand the situation. If you are one of those experts, start now to gather information, establish yourself with the media and practice your messages.

- Know what you can talk about and what you can’t. (New laws strictly limit the release of some information, with substantial penalties to violators.);
- Use simple, straightforward, truthful information that is devoid of technical talk will be much more useful;
- Tell people what you know, and admit what you don’t;
- Say you are uncertain if that’s the case;
- Use examples, images and anecdotes;
- Avoid numbers, theories and government standards;
- Express your feelings;
- Recognize that people want to know if it is “safe” or “dangerous” and you need to help them understand the situation from that simple perspective;
- Be human. Don’t let your desire to look or sound “professional” get in the way.
Top Ten Mistakes

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

-Albert Einstein

Over the years, I’ve seen thousands of interviews. Spokespersons tend to make similar mistakes. (Einstein notwithstanding, media interviews are not the place to try something new.) The following ten are among the most common:

1. **Unprepared.** Homework not done, messages not polished, too anxious to get the interview over. In some cases, they didn’t interview the interviewer so they could anticipate the questions and be ready with answers.

2. **No message.** Just there to answer the reporter’s questions. Not having a message is missing a great opportunity to talk about what you want to talk about. Reporters aren’t paid to ask good, easy questions or to probe for your message. You must have a message and bridge to it at every opportunity.

3. **Over-answering.** Reporters don’t want an education. They want a sound bite or a quote. Learn to stop talking when you’ve given a brief answer to the question. If they want more, they’ll ask.

4. **Message doesn’t fit the medium.** Talking technical to a daily newspaper and low energy communication to a television reporter are examples of messages that don’t fit the medium.

5. **Building to a conclusion.** It’s the natural thing to do, so we go through our rationale point by point, until we have built the foundation for the conclusion. Reporters (and their audiences) are far more interested in the conclusion than in how we got to it. Start with your conclusion, then explain how you got there.

6. **The hard sell.** Reporters aren’t interested in selling your product or service. Their job is to dig up useful and interesting information for their audience. Save sales pitches for customers.

7. **Using jargon, acronyms.** Even if the reporter understands it—and that is a risky proposition—there’s a good chance the audience won’t. Use everyday English. Leave the technical stuff in the office.

8. **Discussing competitors.** Don’t bother. Better you should spend the time talking about the distinguishing features of your product or service, quality, prices, etc. Take the high road if you want to improve your chances of getting good coverage.

9. **Thinking it’s a conversation.** It’s not. Emphatically. You are there to present your answers and only a couple of those are likely to wind up in the story. The full context just won’t make it. Remember to offer answers that will stand alone.

10. **Forgetting that body language counts.** How many spokespersons have forgotten to comb their hair, straighten their tie or make good eye contact? Yet that’s the first thing the reporter or the audience sees, and it creates an instant and lasting impression.
Interview Tips

"Everyone has a magic button. Our job as reporters is to find it and push it."

-Anonymous

1. **Prepare.** Before you agree to an interview, find out what the reporter wants to know. Reporters may not give you exact questions in advance, but they should tell you the line of questioning. Offer your data in brief, simple phrases. If a reporter surprises you with an unanticipated question, it is okay to say, "I don't know."

2. **Be helpful.** Define the story for the reporter. Explain it in simple, everyday terms. What does it mean to the viewer/reader? Remember, the reporter may cover as many as three or four stories each day. You are the expert.

3. **Listen carefully** to each question. Ask for clarification, definition, restatement if necessary. Don't try to anticipate questions.

4. **Do not offer data unless specifically asked.** Keep data simple and easy to understand.

5. **Answer a reporter's questions briefly and simply, then STOP TALKING.**

6. **Say the most important thing you have to say first, and say it best.** Reporters look for memorable quotes or sound bites. They’ll quote the best thing or the worst thing you say.

7. **Have your own message.** Each interview presents an opportunity to say something positive about what you do or your organization does. Be ready to bridge from the reporter's question to the answer you want to give.

8. **Don't go “off the record” and above all, NEVER LIE** to reporter. Either can easily turn a one-day story into a seven-day saga.

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Reporters will likely quote the best thing you say or the worst thing you say.
Print Interview Techniques

"The difference between burlesque and the newspapers is that the former never pretended to be performing a public service by exposure."

—L.F. Stone

1. Be prepared to offer print journalists greater detail. Print journalists are more likely to be specialists in a certain area (beat), thus, better informed about your subject. In some cases, print reporters will work on a story for several days. They will interview dozens of people, and you may be only a small part of a very large story or series.

2. Maintain a calm and composed attitude. Print reporters get paid to ask questions, not to become your best friend. They may use a variety of techniques to get answers. Don't be offended by the questions.

3. Provide data to back up your assertions. Print reporters are able to use statistical data. If it is to be translated into a graphic form, offer to have your experts review it again before it goes into print.

4. Don't ask to read or preview the story before it is printed. Some reporters will check quotes or facts prior to publication, but you have no right to review or edit story content.

5. If you cannot respond to a reporter's question, say why. Reporters understand that certain information may be off limits because of personnel, proprietary or legal reasons, but they are bound to ask. They are far more likely to accept your answer if it is truthful.

Appendix B
Television Interview Techniques

"The one function that TV news performs very well is that when there is no news we give it to you with the same enthusiasm as if there were."  
-David Brinkley

1. **How you look and sound is often more important than what you say.** Tone of voice, body language and gestures can validate or invalidate a verbal message. Be relaxed, confident and at ease. Maintain steady eye contact.

2. **Sit upright** toward the front of the chair and lean slightly forward.

3. **Eye contact is critical.** Establish and maintain **constant** eye contact with the reporter. **Darting eyes indicate nervousness, lack of preparation or lack of confidence.** If you are being interviewed via live camera with the host in a distant studio (CNBC or ABC Nightline-type interview), look directly into the camera at all times, even if you think you're not on.

4. **Say the most important thing you have to say at the beginning of the interview.** Start with the conclusion – don’t build to it. In edited interviews, repeat your message several times.

5. **Avoid using statistics or other complex data.** Use analogy and anecdotes to explain complex issues. Use colorful words. Avoid jargon and technical language.

6. **Arrange the interview at the scene of the story** rather than in your office. Avoid "behind-the-desk" interviews. Backdrop is important.

7. **For live, in-studio interviews, eye contact is with the host or the person to whom you are speaking.** Do not attempt to play to the camera.

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How you look and sound is often more important than what you say. Maintain steady eye contact with the reporter.

Appendix C
Radio Interview Techniques

"Radio news is bearable. This is due to the fact that while the news is being broadcast, the disc jockey is not allowed to talk."

-Fran Lebowitz

1. Talk as though you were speaking with one person across the dinner table. A normal tone of voice, at normal volume is fine. Your tone of voice and inflections are as important as the words you speak.

2. Speak clearly, distinctly and enunciate carefully. Remember that the radio listener does not have visual cues. Do not jump in on the end of the interviewer's question, even if you know what the rest of the sentence is. The audience doesn't.

3. Develop one or two main points you want to make and stick to them. Use colorful words, anecdotes and personal experience.

4. Keep answers and statements short and simple. Do not build complex responses that depend on previous answers. Avoid jargon, acronyms and technical terms. Start with your conclusion.

5. Avoid speakerphones, headsets and cell and cordless phones. The sound quality is poor. If you are initiating the call, dial *70 before dialing the call to disable call waiting.

6. Do not adjust the microphone or fiddle with buttons, knobs or switches.

7. For talk shows, prepare some questions. In general, radio reporters and hosts cover many topics in a day. They may know very little about your issue. Be prepared to offer them some questions that can lead to some of the areas you want to talk about.

8. Be enthusiastic, sincere and somewhat animated. Don't read from prepared scripts or notes. If you must have reminders, use a card with one-word cues.
Never Say "No Comment"

"No comment' is a splendid expression. I am using it again and again.” —Winston Churchill

"No comment" is the worst possible response to a reporter's question. It implies guilt or that you're hiding something. Churchill may have used it on occasion, but in his day, reporters and the public were a bit more forgiving. There are times when it is not appropriate to answer fully, such as when your lawyer advises you to keep quiet, when customer or patient relationships require confidentiality, etc. Even then you should go beyond "no comment" when dealing with reporters. For example:

"Because of company regulations, I cannot comment about the Smith account or whether bills were paid. I can tell you that it is our policy to continue service for up to two months when accounts are past due. We will conduct a thorough investigation to determine whether our policies were followed in this case."

If a reporter calls about an issue, he or she is probably going to do a story. Saying "no comment" won't change that. Instead, work with the reporter to help him/her understand:

1. That you are limited in what you can say;
2. That there are certain laws, policies or practices governing what information you can offer;
3. That you can talk about the general situation without divulging specifics about the particular case; and
4. That you can talk about policies, practices and processes with which you work, but nothing else.

Finally, bridge to your message using phrases such as "What I can tell you is..." or "That relates to a more important issue...".

Saying "no comment" will not cause the reporter to drop the story.

Appendix E
Framing The Issue

"If you can, be first. If you can’t be first, create a new category in which you can be first."

Al Ries & Jack Trout
"The 22 Immutable Laws of Marketing"

(Framing is the way you label or brand the issue or give it context.)

1. Frame the story so reporters will want to cover it. Do that by introducing conflict, controversy or criticism – being certain you are on the "pro" side of the issue. You can attract television by offering interesting and creative visual elements. Be sure the story is compelling – that it will truly be of interest to a wide range of people.

2. Frame story elements by wrapping them in words that reflect your position in a positive way. Employ such words as “safe,” “affordable,” “high quality,” “leading edge,” at every opportunity in describing your programs. Some people in adversarial situations attempt to frame their opponents in negative terms (political commercials typify this with terms such as “gridlock,” or “unbalanced budget”) however extreme caution is in order here.

3. Ask yourself how you would like to have the public think of you – which two or three adjectives shine the most positive light on your efforts. Pick colorful, action words that will raise positive images. Avoid negative or defensive words because they don’t advance issues.

4. Talk about how your product or service benefits the audience, rather than about its features. "We provide high speed digital access for physicians..." just doesn’t get it. Instead, say, "With our service, your doctor can get his/her information much quicker."

The person who sets the frame, or context first often has the advantage in the story.

Appendix F
Use Smooth Connecting Phrases to Get From the Question to Your Objective

"Your problem is to bridge the gap that exists between where you are now and the goal you intend to reach." - Earl Nightingale

"It’s important to remember…"
"The key point is…"
"Here’s the big picture…"
"Here’s what that really means…"
"There’s a bigger issue involved here."
"I think it’s important to understand…"
"It’s not our policy to discuss ___ however I can tell you…"
"There's more to that than meets the eye."
"What that newspaper story didn't tell you is..."
"Let me set the record straight on that."
"That's one point of view. Let me give you another."
"We’re not going to speculate. What I can tell you is..."
"Let me tell you what we are doing about..."
"Our position on that issue is..."
"We beg to differ on that."
"Yes, and....." (Avoid saying "No, but...")
"Let me explain how it should be…”
"Here's the rest of that story.”
"I gotta’ tell you...”
"Our view is…”
"Let's talk about what is happening…”

Appendix G
Crisis Communication

"The 'First Rule of Holes' is: When you find yourself in one, stop digging." - Molly Ivins

1. Go to the scene of the crisis **immediately**. That is where reporters and cameras will be, and they will expect you to have high-ranking officials there.

2. **Assign one spokesperson** who has no other responsibilities than dealing with the media. Advise everybody to funnel all media contacts to that person. Nobody else should comment on any aspect of the crisis.

3. **Set up a specific place for reporters**. If the story will be a long one, provide creature comforts, including electrical and digital outlets, restrooms, tables and chairs, coffee and soft drinks.

4. Give reporters as much information as you can, as soon as you can. Rumors surface quickly, especially when there is a void of facts. Tell reporters what you know, what you don't know and when you expect to have more answers.

5. **Show compassion**. If people have been injured or killed, your first statement must show your feelings.

6. **Announce all the bad news at once**. Get the story over with as quickly as possible.

7. **Don't wait for all the information**. You'll probably never have it all anyway.

8. **Avoid assigning responsibility or blame** until you and your lawyer are absolutely certain, beyond a shadow of doubt, that your conclusions are **verifiably correct**. **NEVER SPECULATE**.

9. Correct reporters' incorrect assumptions, but don't repeat the error. Lead with good news and always tell the truth.

10. **Nothing is "Off the record."** If you say something to a reporter, expect to see or hear it again.

Get information out quickly, before others put you on the defensive.

Appendix H
Wardrobe and Appearance

“There is nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses.”
—Thomas Aquinas

How you look often has more impact than what you say. Don’t wear clothing or accessories that attract attention or distract from your message.

Some general tips:

♦ Dress conservatively;
♦ Wear only simple, small jewelry;
♦ Select solid colors over patterns;
♦ Avoid tweeds, plaids, herringbones or small prints;
♦ Use makeup very moderately;
♦ Never wear a hat that shades your face; and
♦ Avoid dark or shaded glasses.

Remember that some colors look better on TV than others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Colors</th>
<th>Colors to Avoid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>Red and Pink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>Some greens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Lavender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan</td>
<td>Mustard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Plaids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remove name tags, identification badges, items from shirt pockets before the interview.

Look the part. If you wear a uniform at work, wear it for the interview. Physicians should wear their lab coats (and, yes, a stethoscope is OK). Airline pilots should wear their uniform coat, but not the hat. Military and law enforcement people should be in uniform. On a job site, be conscious of safety requirements. Wear hardhats, eye protection, etc., if indicated.

There was a time when wearing a white shirt or blouse on TV was not OK. While a gray, blue or beige tone may be preferable, today’s TV cameras can handle the sharp contrasts between a dark coat or jacket and a white shirt.
Building relationships with the Media

"The fact that a man is a newspaper reporter is evidence of some flaw of character."
-Lyndon B. Johnson

Good relationships with reporters are no different than with anybody else. They are built on a foundation of mutual need and trust. Here are some things you can do to start or enhance those relationships:

1. Identify yourself to reporters and editors who regularly cover your beat;
2. Determine what they need and show how you can provide it;
3. Be easily available. Offer work, home, pager and cellular phone numbers and e-mail addresses so reporters can reach you whenever news breaks;
4. Examine the major activities of your organization in terms of potential media interest;
5. Keep up with the news and offer timely local angles or expertise to world, national and regional stories;
6. Once you’ve developed a trusting relationship, call reporters to give them a “heads-up” that a big story is about to break;
7. Be as quick to respond when the news is bad as when it is good.

Use news conferences rarely – only when you’re making a major newsworthy announcement of interest to a wide range of people. (See Appendix K.) To encourage television coverage, create visual activities, but avoid trite events such as ribbon cuttings or ground breakings.

The time to build media relationships is before you need them. Don’t wait until you’re in the middle of a crisis.

Examine all the major activities of your organization in terms of potential media interest.
The News (Press) Conference

“News is what I say it is.”
-Washington Post Editor Ben Bradlee

Ask yourself, "Is this newsworthy?" While news conferences are a useful and practical way of disseminating information through the media, it is important to evaluate the potential news value of your event or activity before calling a news conference. In many cities, there are dozens of news conferences every day, and some of them receive little or no coverage. Is there something truly new in which there is high public interest? If so, here are some guidelines:

1. **Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are usually best.** A mid-day hour (10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.) is preferable. Unless it is a major crisis, never hold a news conference on the weekend or after 3:00 p.m.

2. **Pick a quiet, private location** that has easy access, convenient parking and adequate electrical power. If using a backdrop (i.e., a river, a building) avoid those that are busy or that afford bystanders a chance to parade for the camera. Avoid gimmicks such as ribbon cuttings and ground breakings.

3. **Prepare a brief opening statement.** Say the most important thing you have to say in the first sentence. Reporters will be paying attention and all the cameras will be running then.

4. **Be patient.** Expect dumb, irrelevant, irreverent, repeated questions. Answer patiently and politely.

5. **Make graphics and illustrations large and simple.** Provide copies in the press kit and put media materials on your website.

6. **Limit the number of participants to one or two.** Avoid having a gallery of people standing or sitting beside or behind you. It can be distracting and confusing to reporters and to the television audience.

7. **Don’t hold a news conference** if you have other pending or unresolved issues that have been in the media. Reporters may use the opportunity to open those issues and the subject of your news conference may fall by the wayside.

Appendix K
The News (Press) Release

"Simplify, simplify."
-Henry David Thoreau

Busy editors may receive hundreds of news releases every day. To be effective and receive attention, yours must follow a few important rules:

1. **Be sure your event or idea is newsworthy.** The best release will not draw reporters to a "ho-hum" event.

2. **Understand that the news release may be rewritten or may be the starting point for additional coverage.** There is no law that requires that a news release be published in the form you submitted or published at all.

3. **Use journalistic style.** Say who, what, when, where, why and how.

4. **Put the news in the lead sentence.** Don't expect the editor to dig it out. If you bury the news in the release, busy editors may bury your release in their wastebaskets.

5. **Keep data simple, verifiable and meaningful.** Avoid jargon, acronyms and technical terms.

6. **Be modest.** Nothing turns an editor off quicker than a boasting release filled with beautiful, grandiose adjectives and wonderful, warm self-congratulations.

7. **Limit releases to one or two pages.** Type and double-space them. Be sure to include your name, phone number, e-mail address and URL.

8. **Target your release.** If it deals with a health issue, send it to the health or medicine editor. If it's a business matter, send it to the business editor or reporter.

9. **Time the release** to receive maximum coverage. Fax or e-mail it. Avoid sending a release to arrive on Friday or Saturday. By Monday it may be old news.

Appendix L
Non-Verbal Gestures and Emotional States

"What you are speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Gestures and facial expressions may indicate feelings or emotions, however they should be regarded only as one indication of a person's emotional state. Be conscious of how your demeanor can reveal what your words do not:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPENNESS</th>
<th>SUSPICION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open hands</td>
<td>Sideways glancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbuttoned coat</td>
<td>Touching chin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncrossed legs</td>
<td>Touching near eye</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfolded arms</td>
<td>Drawing back</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COOPERATION</th>
<th>INSECURITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaning forward</td>
<td>Pinching flesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open hands, arms</td>
<td>Tugging (hair, ear)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unbuttoned coat</td>
<td>Chewing on anything</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFIDENCE</th>
<th>DEFENSIVENESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steeped hands</td>
<td>Arms, legs crossed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands behind back</td>
<td>Fists clenched</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hands holding lapel</td>
<td>Index finger pointing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Karate chop&quot; gestures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
<th>NERVOUSNESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hand to face</td>
<td>Clearing throat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head tilted</td>
<td>&quot;Phew&quot; sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroking chin</td>
<td>Covering mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peering over glasses</td>
<td>Wringing hands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FRUSTRATION</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short breaths</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubbing hair, neck</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice say more about your state of mind than all your words.

Appendix M
Handling Adversarial Questions

"Facing the press is more difficult than bathing a leper."

-Mother Theresa

Reporters frequently phrase questions in a way that is designed to draw out specific responses. When confronted by such queries you should:

- Avoid becoming defensive or angry;
- Keep answers brief and direct; and
- Bridge to your SOCO (Single Overriding Communications Objective) at every opportunity.

Here are the specific types of questions with techniques on handling each one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>An Example</th>
<th>Your Action</th>
<th>Your Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobson’s choice (Either-or)</td>
<td>&quot;Has your department always ignored this issue, or have you just started?&quot;</td>
<td>Get outside the &quot;or&quot; box – avoid defensive answer – go to SOCO</td>
<td>&quot;Our department has always been concerned about this problem...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculative</td>
<td>&quot;Why hasn’t the legislature stopped funding this program?&quot;</td>
<td>Avoid speculating. Go to SOCO.</td>
<td>&quot;I can’t speak for anybody else, but I can tell you this program is...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothetical</td>
<td>&quot;If the laws change, will you straighten out this program?&quot;</td>
<td>If you expect it to happen, be proactive. If not, don’t speculate.</td>
<td>&quot;We’ve been pushing for that law...&quot; &quot;I won’t speculate on what the legislature might do, I will say...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading question</td>
<td>&quot;Your new director hasn’t done much to help, has she?&quot;</td>
<td>You may disagree, ignore, define or reframe with SOCO.</td>
<td>&quot;She has been an outstanding leader in the area of...&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value question</td>
<td>&quot;Is this method safer than the one used in...&quot;</td>
<td>Ask for definition of &quot;safer&quot; or define it yourself.</td>
<td>&quot;By our definition of safety, we have an excellent record...&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Loaded question | "You have plenty of money. Why aren't you allocating it more effectively?" | Don't become defensive. You can ignore, accept, reject or define. | "That's simply not true..."  
"Our funding has strict limits and guidelines..."

| Vague question | "What are your future plans for community participation?" | Ask for clarification ("How far into the future are you thinking?") or answer any way you wish — with SOCO. | "Community involvement will continue to be a top priority for as far out as we can see..."

| False premise | "Everybody knows you have a horrible reputation for promoting minorities..." | Avoid repeating poison words ("horrible"). Correct the error and move to SOCO. | "First, let me set the record straight. We have an excellent record..."

| Stacked questions | "Are you going to fix the problem? Why did it happen in the first place? Who is responsible? Will you punish them?" | Answer only the part you most want to answer. Ignore other parts unless you want to address them. Be positive. | "The answer to your first/second/third/last question is..."

| Nonquestion | "Your department has a really poor record. Now you're making it worse." | Ask for the question. Avoid becoming defensive. Respond briefly. | "What is the question?"  
"We have always maintained highest standards..."

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*Appendix N*
On Being a Television "Expert"

"Television is bubble-gum for the mind."
-Frank Lloyd Wright

The war in Iraq and other recent events have highlighted the role and importance of "experts" in television's news format. Typical expert appearances are three to four minutes long, involve a handful of questions and require short and easily understood answers. Unlike the typical television news interview, experts are usually not put on the spot or expected to handle surprise or trap questions. Indeed, in most cases, the questions they are asked are reviewed and sometimes rehearsed before their on-air segment begins. If you are asked to be an on-air "expert" keep these tips in mind:

1. **Look at and talk to the program host**, not the camera (unless you are specifically instructed to address the camera).

2. **Keep answers simple and short.** You are not there to show how much you know, but to help the viewer understand what is happening and how to deal with it.

3. **Avoid ALL acronyms, jargon, technical or medical terms.** Speak in plain English, using short, simple sentences.

4. **Use illustrations where possible.** Maps and diagrams are very powerful. They must be simple, clear and easily understood. Remember the viewer doesn’t have the opportunity to study the illustration until it is on the screen, so leave it there long enough that it can be studied. If pointing, make your motions slow and steady.

5. **Don't argue with the host, and don't offer "inside" information that you should not disclose.**
Effective Hi-Tech Presentations

"Men have become tools of their tools."
-Henry David Thoreau

Computer-based programs can be a real benefit to both you and the audience. They can also be a real nightmare if everything doesn’t work perfectly or if the time allocation is suddenly revised.

1. **Keep presentations simple.** PowerPoint slides should contain no more than six bullets and a maximum of six words per bullet. Select colors carefully, preferring a dark background (blue is usually best) with light colored printing.

2. **Get to your presentation room early.** Allow at least 30 minutes for setup of computer and projection equipment if it’s your own – longer if using borrowed equipment. Carry extra plugs, cords and adapters.

3. **Insist** that a member of the hotel AV staff be present when you set up. They can often provide cords, tables, etc. or resolve problems with switches or blinds.

4. **Turn off** screensaver and power management utilities so your computer will not shut down midway through the show. Run on house power, not batteries.

5. **Position the computer** so you can see its screen while facing the audience so you won’t have to turn your back on the audience to check what they’re seeing.

6. **Have backups.** Bring a copy of your presentation on a floppy disk and a set of overhead slides.

7. **Check the lighting.** Be sure there is no overhead light splashing on the screen. Identify room light switches beforehand and have somebody else set to turn lights down – but not completely off.

8. **Don’t get stuck behind the lectern.** Move around, staying out of the audience’s line of sight to the screen. Use a wireless microphone to give your mobility and an wireless remote unit to advance slides.

9. **Be anecdotal.** Don’t just read the slides – the audience is perfectly capable of doing that. Tell stories about your key points.

Anticipate every possible problem and get there early – way early!

Appendix P
Norm Hartman

Norm Hartman is a consultant who prepares people to take advantage of media and public appearance opportunities. His clients — top executives, elected officials, authors, organizational spokespersons and others — have appeared on, 60 Minutes, Dateline, Nightline, 20/20, 48 Hours, The Today Show, Good Morning America, CNBC, CNN and hundreds of network and local television and radio news broadcasts. They’ve been interviewed by print media, including, popular, consumer, trade and professional publications, worldwide. His clients include a number of America’s largest corporations and government agencies.

Hartman was a broadcast journalist for fifteen years, including four years as senior news editor at KRON-TV (NBC) in San Francisco. He was News Director at KOVR-TV (ABC) in Sacramento for four years.

Subsequently, he spent nine years with Pacific Bell as director of media and public relations for Northern California, where he pioneered the concept of media training for the company’s executives.

After four years as head of information and public affairs for the California Department of Health Services he turned his attention to media, crisis and risk communication speaking and presentation training and coaching.

Hartman conducts seminars and training programs throughout the United States and Canada. They range from individual half-day sessions to convention and organization-wide media and public presentation skills workshops. In addition to several newspaper and magazine articles about media relations, he is the author of "The Media & You—a Basic Survival Guide," published and distributed worldwide by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, GA.
Ordering, Legal Stuff
and Other Information

Additional copies of this book may be ordered directly from Norm Hartman at TMT Worldwide, Inc. by calling 800-732-1722 or by e-mail at www.tmtww.com.

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About TMT Worldwide, Inc.

We’ve been doing media, crisis, risk communication and public speaking training since 1974. Our clients include some of America’s largest companies and agencies. We’ll be happy to discuss your communications training needs, to provide references, and to describe our unique capabilities. Contact us for more information at 800-732-1722 or www.tmtww.com.

Our consulting services include:

Media Interview Training
Our nationally acclaimed media interview training program is designed to help clients understand media motives, to anticipate reporters’ questions and to deliver messages in a compelling and quotable way. Each training workshop is customized to meet the specific needs of the client, and includes actual mock interview exercises and critiques, built around the client’s particular situations.

In addition to its obvious benefits, media training also helps you test key messages, helps you develop skills that can be used in other communication settings and provides a testing ground for would-be spokespersons.

Our clients have appeared on 60 Minutes, Dateline, Nightline, Crossfire, 48 Hours, all the major network newscasts and have been interviewed by print media worldwide.

Crisis Communication
Is your organization ready for a crisis that could bring your operations to an abrupt stop? If not, we can help you by identifying your potential vulnerabilities, preparing a plan to communicate with internal and external publics and then helping you with training and practice for the day when it happens (and it will!).

We’ve helped some of America’s largest corporations develop and refine their crisis readiness, and we can help you, too.
Public Speaking and Presentation Training
The Book of Lists says speaking before a group is the activity we fear most. It need not be. With proper insights, training and practice, most people can be very effective speakers. We can help you develop critical skills and refine them so that you can “knock ‘em over.”

Most organizations view effective public speaking and presentation skills as essential for advancement. Can you afford to let a career stall because of a case of stage fright?

We are expert in PowerPoint and other audio/visual program enhancements and can assist in developing and refining your audio/visual communications.

Conference and Convention Programs and Workshops
We can provide a variety of programs for conventions and conferences including keynote speeches, workshops and breakout sessions. Contact us for help in putting together a conference people won’t forget.

Individual Consultation and Training
Our individual consultation and training programs meet specific and individual needs of CEOs and top managers, authors, elected officials, medical experts, candidates and others who need special or confidential help.

Some Additional Free Stuff
You’ll find some additional information relating to media training, crisis communication, risk communication and speaking/presentation training at our website, www.tmtww.com. We update that information periodically, so some of it may be more up-to-date than the information in this book. It’s free and use and duplication is unrestricted.

Contact us today at 800-732-1722 or at tmtww.com.
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