

Working with Media and Risk Communication

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What We'll Cover Today

- Communication goals
- Working effectively with media and each medium's needs
- Deciding and delivering the message
- Five tough questions from reporters
- Examples of media calls

Why Is This Important?

Stories → Shape Public Perception → \$\$

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CHALLENGES:

Stories are based upon conflict
Changing mediums – more stories, more sensation

Communication Goals

- Knowledge and understanding
- Trust and credibility
- Motivate behavior – get people to act OR not do something
- Set stage for future messaging
- Avoid communication regret

Risk Communications = 90% of what goes wrong is communications

Will Rodgers

When people are stressed and upset,
they want to know that you care before they care
what you know.

Perception During High Stress

In times of high stress or emotion,
risk perception shifts from facts
to
PERCEPTIONS

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH MEDIA

Working With Media

- All media – newspapers, radio, TV – want the human aspect of the story
- Find a “face” to the story when you can
- **27/9/3**
 - 27 words for print
 - 9 seconds for radio and TV
 - 3 key messages

Know Your Audience

- Remember who you are really talking to
- What are their fears?
- What behavior do you want to motivate?
- WHY SHOULD THEY CARE?

Newspapers

- Quote and picture
- Keep to your main messages
- Think about how what you will be saying will “look” in context to the rest of the story

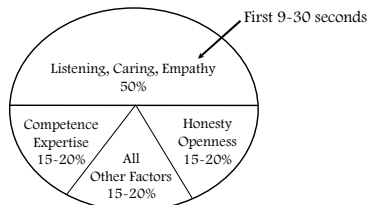
Radio

- 9 seconds for a soundbyte, generally
- Can go a little longer during a live radio interview
- Tell a story or visually paint a picture for the audience. The audience is *listening* to you, so say something that’s relevant to them.

Television

People judge the messenger before the message

- Soundbyte and picture
- 9 seconds for a soundbyte
- Be aware of your non-verbal communication
- Look at the interviewer, not the camera or monitor



Non-Verbal Communication

- Trust is established through actions, body language and verbal communication
- Eyes, hands, posture, appearance, voice

Working with Media

- Keep your audience in mind
- What are the issues?
- Who will be the interviewer?
- Is there a hidden agenda?
- What is the cost/benefit ratio?
- Any ground rules?

Working with Media

DO:

- Know the medium
- Understand the issues and topic
- Anticipate questions
- Prepare and practice your response (message map)
- Be confident, exert control of the interview
- Keep your cool even if interview becomes hostile
- Realize you are “on the record” and stay there
- Listen carefully
- Choose your words

Working with Media

DON'T:

- Do an interview with preparing and practicing
- Lose your cool
- Go “off the record”
- Answer hypothetical questions
- Lie or knowingly mislead or comment beyond your knowledge
- Talk “flippantly”
- Treat a question as dumb
- Introduce new material unnecessarily
- Let them pull you off track

DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING YOUR MESSAGE

Message Mapping/Talking Points

■ FACTS

Fast Answers Clear Truthful Simple

■ 27/9/3

27 words for print

9 seconds for radio and TV

Message Mapping

- Most important messages go first and last
- Three key messages address the main concerns of your audience
- Creates an organized response to anticipated questions or concerns
- Provides direction to the spokesperson so messages are consistent and the organization can speak with one voice

Message Map Example – Bird Flu

There are no human cases of Avian influenza in Wisconsin.

We actively look for human cases in the state.

We have plans in place to respond to Avian influenza.

27 Words/9 Seconds:

“There are no human cases of Avian influenza in Wisconsin. We actively look for human cases in the state and we have plans in place to respond”

Message Map Example – Bird Flu

There are no human cases of Avian influenza in Wisconsin.

- There is not an imminent threat to people in Wisconsin
- Human cases of avian influenza have been identified mainly in Southeast Asia
- There is no evidence of sustained human to human spread of avian influenza.

We actively look for human cases in the state.

- Wisconsin's criteria for testing people for avian influenza exceeds CDC recommendations.
- We identify and test sick individuals for avian influenza if there is a possibility they were exposed to the virus, such as travelers who have recently returned from southeast Asia.
- Since January 1, 2004, Wisconsin has tested 23 people that have met the criteria. No cases of confirmed avian influenza have been identified.

We have plans in place to respond to Avian influenza.

- Wisconsin created a pandemic plan in 2001. It already has the components of early detection, containment and treatment as the federal plan suggests.
- Our pandemic plan defines the roles of state and local health agencies.
- The plans is designed to help control the spread of avian influenza.

Message Map Example – Measles

We are concerned and are closely monitoring this situation.

- Continuing our surveillance and investigating reported cases.
- We've had a total of 7 confirmed cases and two rubella cases
- We are working with local health departments, infection control experts and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

We're communicating with local health officers across the state.

- Sent out information on how to properly collect laboratory specimens and how to submit them to the state laboratory.
- Provide periodic updates and answer questions.
- Health Officers report their confirmed and probable cases to us (reportable disease).
- We routinely provide MMR vaccine to health departments and private providers.

We recommend people get vaccinated, if they haven't already.

- Given as MMR vaccine (measles, mumps, rubella) and two doses normally provide lifelong immunity.
- Children: two doses, 1st at 12-15 months of age, 2nd between 4-6 years of age; Adults who have never had the measles vaccine can still get immunized (see below).
- Contact your health care provider or local public health department with questions or to be immunized.
- People who are not sure about their measles disease or vaccine history and are concerned about being exposed to measles should be vaccinated.

Use Message Mapping

1. Identify stakeholders and concerns they might have
2. Analyze concerns or questions to identify commonality
3. Develop key messages
4. Develop supporting facts for key messages
5. Test message response
6. Deliver message through spokesperson or other appropriate communication channels

Message Mapping Steps

1. **Identify stakeholders and concerns they might have**

Examples: victims, families, emergency response personnel, government agencies at all levels, professional societies, religious and/or scientific community, general public

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2. Analyze concerns to identify commonality

3. **Develop key messages:**

- most **needs** to know
- most **wants** to know

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3. Develop key messages:

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4. **Develop supporting facts for three key messages**

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Developing the Message Map

1. If trying to impress, remove it
2. Use very little jargon
3. If must use jargon or technical term, introduce concept before the term
4. Warn audience about difficult material
5. Simple sentence structure

Choosing the Spokesperson

- Knowledgeable
- Can genuinely express caring/empathy
- Consider two spokespersons – one for messaging, other as expert
- Will be recognizable throughout the event

Delivering the Message

- Most important messages first *and* last
- Establish credentials
- Say “first, second, third”
- State three key messages first, then return to first point and give support facts
- Answer reporter’s question, but bridge back to message
- Do not speculate and do not introduce new material/issue

Delivering the Message

- Tell stories
- Personalize
- Check for understanding
- Tell them when next update will happen
- Bridge back to the main points

Five Tough Questions

- What do you know?
- Can you guarantee...?
- Just answer yes or no
- What’s the worst that can happen, worst case scenario?
- False allegation

KEY:

Answer the reporter’s questions, but bridge back to our main messages

What Do You Know?

- Repeat the question
- Acknowledge you don’t know and why
- Cite the source that can answer the question
- Describe follow-up action and when answer can be provided
- Bridge to three main talking points

Can You Guarantee?

- Say it's difficult to answer and indicate why
- Focus on the future and processes
- Acknowledge past/present, if necessary
- Bridge to three main talking points

Just Answer Yes or No

- Acknowledge it's a yes or no question
- Say it's difficult to answer and indicate why
- Bridge to three main talking points

Worst Case Scenario

- "You've asked me a 'what if' question – let's talk about 'what is'"
- Bridge to three main talking points

False Allegation

- Identify and state underlying value
- Indicate what is true and important to you
- Indicate what you are doing or will do to maximize/achieve the value
- Bridge to three main talking points.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE:

Media Advisory

Press Release

Press Conference

Media Advisory vs. Press Release

Advisory

- "Tease" the event (press conference, etc.)
- Outline and preview, but don't write the story
- Who, what, when, where and why
- Follow-up with calls to get media to attend event

Press Release

- More in-depth
- Issued *after* event has taken place
- Use message map to write for you

Media Advisory & Press Release

- Sixth grade reading level
- Write in “present” tense
- Write in short sentences, using a subject-verb format
- Know audience and write in the appropriate tone
- Avoid acronyms
- Release: keep it to one page whenever possible

Media Advisory & Press Release

- “For Immediate Release” vs. “Embargoed Until xxx”
- Title that will catch media’s eye
- Who, what, when, where, why and how in the first paragraph
- Why does this matter to them?
- Release: if using a quote, recommend putting it in the second paragraph

Press Conference

- No more than 30 minutes in length
- Best time of day is between 10:30 – 2:00 p.m.
- Spokesperson delivers message. Others provide technical details
- Use message map - main talking points
- Room set up
- Is there a family or other personal touch?
- VISUALS

EXAMPLES

Keys to Success

THINK BEFORE YOU RESPOND

Anticipate
Prepare
Practice