CRISIS PROOFING YOUR ORGANIZATION:
How Your Crisis Plan Can Pass Seven Powerful Reputation Protecting Tests

Participant Guide

Sponsored by
North Dakota Professional Communicators
Spring Conference 2014

Presented by
James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

Friday, April 11th, 2014
1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Central

Contents

- Participant Letter
- Handout
- James E. Lukaszewski Biography
April 2014

Dear Seminar Participant:

   Thank you for registering for *Crisis Proofing Your Reputation: How Your Crisis Plan Can Pass Seven Powerful Reputation Protecting Tests*. This program focuses on valuable techniques and strategies for purposeful crisis preparation.

   Experience shows that most early response failures fall into an identifiable series of circumstances, including an overoptimistic assessment of readiness, failure to differentiate crisis situations from business problems or disasters, failure to set and coordinate communication priorities with operational action, failure to take the first step promptly or mobilize corporate functions for crisis response, and failure to manage the victim dimension. This program will focus on strategies crucial to response success, response triggering mechanisms, and response plan components; and includes a template approach to accelerate management acceptance and participation.

   Many of you may have questions on this topic. It would help me to know them in advance of the seminar. The more specifically I can tailor the content to those participating, the better the program will be. Also, the last 20 minutes of this program will be devoted to the specific questions and concerns of those participating in the seminar.

   To contact me ahead of time with the issues or questions you’d like me to address during the program, you may do so by email:

       jel@e911.com – email

   See you on April 11th. The time will be jam-packed with interesting and useful information.

Sincerely,

James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA*
President
The Lukaszewski Group Division Risdall Marketing Group
Crisis Proofing Your Organization:
How Your Crisis Plan Can Pass Seven Powerful Reputation Protecting Tests

By James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
Today’s Program Topics

• Preventing Crisis - Preserving Reputation
• Identify and reduce risks and exposures
• Crisis plan components
  – Response triggers
  – First response: The one that matters
  – Scenarios: The heart of your preparation
  – Templates: Global responsiveness
  – Managing the boss/bosses

Today’s Program Topics (Continued)

• Involving key people in the planning process
• Avoiding mistakes and errors that cause readiness failure
• Digital/social media readiness

Crisis Defined

• Crises are show-stopping, people-stopping, product-stopping, reputation-defining situations that create victims and/or explosive visibility.
The Six Types of Crises Are...

1. Operating, i.e., directly involving how the business works every day.

2. Non-operating

Non-Operating Crisis Examples

- Berserk employee
- Bomb threats
- Bullying
- Business loss
- Crimes in progress
- Criminal behavior
- Decapitation
- Demonstration/Protest
- Disgruntled employees
- Major theft
- Ethics problems
- Extortion
- Kidnapping
- Litigation
- Obscene/Cooercive behavior
- Scandal
- Sexual harassment
- Sudden stock drop
- Terrorist attack
- Web attacks
- Whistle blowers
- Workplace violence

The Six Types of Crises Are...

3. Combinations of the two, or more
### The Six Types of Crises Are...

#### Continued

#### 4. Disaster Examples
- Earthquakes  
- Evacuation  
- Explosion  
- Fire/flames  
- Flooding/torrential rain  
- General disruptions/threats  
- Hazardous materials/chemical spills/gas leaks/toxic fumes  
- Major storms  
- Medical emergencies  
- News media response  
- Noxious odors  
- Power outages  
- Ruptured water pipes  
- Smoke/burning odors  
- Tornado  
- Winter storms

#### 5. Insidious unethical behaviors
- Lax control  
- Lack of tough, appropriate centralized compliance  
- No one charged with responsibility of teaching, enforcing or disciplining  
- Leadership that allows supervisors to overlook bad behavior  
- Leadership that allows employees to experiment with methods and tactics outside established guidelines  
- Emphasis on “doing whatever it takes”  
- Managers and supervisors who minimize the importance of oversight and compliance processes  
- Structuring incentives in a way that can compromise ethical behavior

#### 5. Insidious unethical behaviors cont.
- Avoiding confrontation  
- The tendency to operate “on the edge”  
- Management that ignores the signs of rogue behavior  
- Management tolerating inappropriate behavior by individuals who are “critical to the organization’s mission”  
- Belittling or humiliating those who suggest or seek ethical standards  
- Dismissing or destroying the careers of employees who report bad or outright wrong behavior  
- Demeaning the credibility of those who blow the whistle
6. Virtual Crisis Examples
- Anti-corporate activism
- Anti-corporate blogs
- Boycotts
- Bullying
- Imposter sites
- Personal attacks
- Pornography links
- Rumors
- Short selling
- Web attacks/Web sites

Readiness: The Readiness Equation
- Accurate contact information 75%
- Pre-authorization 15%
- Extensive scenario preparation and testing 8%
- Surprise 2%

The Realities of Reputation Damage
- Bad news always ripens badly.
- It gets worse before it gets better.
- Your response will be criticized by people who weren’t there, quoting people who weren’t there either.
Realities Continued...

- Speed beats smart every time.
- Your response can be operationally perfect, but if you fumble, mumble, and bungle the communications, this is how your response will be remembered.

First Response Issues to Keep in Mind

- Conclusive first response (the grand strategy)
- Effective and appropriate senior management involvement
- Pre-authorization
- Preparing for victims
- Prevention of collateral damage
- Relentless incremental progress to reduce vulnerability
- Unchallengeable behavior

First Response Strategy
Part I (The Grand Strategy)

- Stop victim production
- Manage victim dimension
- Communicate with employees
- Notify the indirectly affected
- Cope with the self-appointed, self-anointed
- Activate Web site response strategy
- Manage the record
Victim Management
Failure Causes Serious Reputational Damage

Manage the Victim Dimension
Or Suffer Their Wrath and Power

Victims Are
• People
• Animals
• Living systems
**Victimization Is**

- Self-designating
- Self-maintaining
- Self-terminating

**Causes of Victimization**

- Abuse
- Arrogance
- Assault
- Bullying
- Callousness
- Carelessness
- Commission
- Deception
- Dismissiveness

- Fear
- Humiliation
- Ignorance
- Lies
- Neglect/negligence
- Omission
- Sarcasm
- Shame
- Surprise

**Victims Feel**

- Anger
  - Disbelief, dread, fear, rage
- Frustration
  - Powerlessness, helplessness
- Inadequacy
  - Walking but wounded, agonized, alone
- Betrayal
  - Trust no one, no one to trust
Victims Suffer

- Intellectual deafness
- 24/7 internal and external monologue
- Everything is a question

Victims Need

- Validation
  - Preferably by the perpetrator
- Visibility
  - To describe their pain and warn others
- Vindication
  - Resolution that prevents the victimization of others

Victims Need (Continued)

- Apology
  - Verbal or written admission of responsibility for hurting someone
  - Specific recognition and description of the damaged caused
  - Lessons learned and changes made to prevent the situation from happening again
  - Offer of restitution
  - Seek/ask for forgiveness
• Twenty-nine U.S. states have enacted laws excluding expressions of sympathy after accidents as proof of liability.

• Nineteen states have enacted laws excluding expressions of sympathy and apology after adverse medical outcomes by medical staffs as proof of liability.

Management Apology Avoidance Strategies

Strategy One: Self-forgiveness

• “It’s an industry problem; we are not the only ones.”
• “This isn’t the first time this has happened, and it won’t be the last time.”
• “Let’s not blow this out of proportion.”

Strategy Two: Self-talk

• “It’s an isolated incident.”
• “If we don’t do it, someone else will.”
• “Let’s not get ahead of ourselves.”

Management Apology Avoidance Strategies (Continued)

Strategy Three: Self-delusion

• “It’s not our fault.”
• “It’s not our problem.”
• “No one could have prevented it.”
• “They didn’t get it right.”
• “They’re wrong.”
• “We’re not responsible.”
• “You can’t believe what they say.”
Management Apology Avoidance Strategies  
(Continued)

Strategy Four: Lying

• “I don’t know.”
• “We’ve never done that.”
• “It hasn’t happened before.”
• “It can’t happen again.”
• “We won’t give up without a fight.”
• “I’m not a crook.”
• “I did not have sex with that woman.”

Leadership Recovery

Management’s Most Crucial Roles

• Assert the moral authority expected of ethical leadership.
• Take responsibility for the care of victims.
• Set the appropriate tone for the response.
• Commit random acts of leadership.

Why Plan?

• Planning answers important questions:
  – Who says it’s a crisis?
  – Who’s in charge?
  – What do we do first?
  – When do we put the boss out front?
  – What will management do?
  – What will management say?
  – What are the messages going to be?
More Questions

- Is the boss really ready?
- Has the entire process been tested?
- How do we know we’ve won or lost?
- How do you assess collateral damage?
- What’s the plan?
- When is it over?
- Who’s on the back-up team?
- Will the boss participate?

Profiles in Failure

1. Denial
2. Victim Confusion
3. Testosterosis
4. Arrogance
5. Search for the Guilty
6. Fear of the Exposure
7. Management by Whining Around

Crisis Planning Steps

- Visibility analysis
  - Planned visibility
  - Unplanned visibility
- Key issues identification
- Scenario development
- Web site development
- Message structures and sequence
- Installation, testing, and updating
**Identify & Reduce Risks & Exposures**

- Be preemptive
- Find tripping points
- Right decisions first

---

**State Your Communication Intentions**

1. Candor
2. Openness, accessibility
3. Truthfulness
4. Responsiveness
5. Empathy
6. Transparency
7. Engagement
8. Clarification & correction

---

**Visibility Analysis**

- Planned visibility
- Unplanned visibility
- Ops crises = 95% of all crises/5% risk
- Non-ops crises = 5% of all crises/95% risk
- Disasters: Threat is response dependent
Key Issues Identification

Prioritize:

• Likelihood of happening
• Impact
• Collateral damage potential

Response Triggers

• Corporate Emergency Response Teams (CERTs)
• Corporate Crisis Communication Response Officer (C³RO)
• Incident Command
• Special Response Units (SRUs)
• Help Desks & Internal/External Hotlines

The Template

• Simple, teachable model
• Focuses on the key response concepts
• Road map to successful responses
• Mindset of readiness
• Global approach
• Basis for strategic management discussion
Typical Organizational Barriers

- Resistance to automatically trigger corporate notification, i.e., a *Call Headquarters If* list
- Competing response priorities between divisions, functions, and product lines
- Other existing plans, e.g., plans developed by others or required by government regulations
- Relationship between corporate and division/branch/field operations
- Response confusion and turf issues
- Existing management response plans

Scenarios as Tools

- Scenarios:
  - Hypothesize the probable chronology of events.
  - Examine hypothetical situations.
  - Identify options for dealing with crisis.
  - Suggest recommendations based on those options.
  - Forecast unintended consequences.
  - Identify key contacts and needed corporate resources.
  - Distill value, if any, from past experience.

Developing Scenario Narratives

1. Identify the situation/generate timeline.
2. Develop a brief analysis of the situation following instructions on the scenario development worksheet.
3. Develop at least three options for managing the situation.
4. Identify an option.
5. Evaluate your recommendation.
6. Use a scenario infrastructure checklist.
7. Establish your first response checklist.
The Crisis Web Site Desktop

1. Facts and data
2. Questions and answers
3. Issues at stake
4. Corrections and clarifications
5. Interactive features

Common Readiness Plan Deficiencies

1. Too general, not specific enough to work
2. No mechanism for rehearsal or effective installation of plans
3. Too complex, too extensive, can’t be effectively used for training
4. Out-of-date with current operations and facilities
Other Readiness Deficiencies (Continued)

5. Contact information out-of-date
6. Employees who are long gone but still retain response assignments in the plan
7. No process for anticipating or planning for new threats
8. Little sense of urgency about being ready

Installation and Testing

• Simulation
• Tabletops
• Drills
• Coaching and training
• Updating

Stay Ready

• Develop an exposure management process.
• Practice ongoing preparation with annual simulations.
• Share case studies.
• Use right way/wrong way models.
• Maintain an active First Response Team.
• Maintain a Social Media Attack Response Team (SMART).
• Indoctrienate managers and supervisors.
• Ongoing preparation and training.
• Prevention efforts.
Stay Alert

• Continuously evaluate your vulnerabilities.
• Manage your exposure.
• Routinely brief management on threats.

Seven Crucial Readiness Tests

Does your response strategy:

1. Build on pattern intuition?
2. Include a management-level response plan?
3. Accommodate the independent nature of branch operations?
4. Incorporate response triggers?

Seven Crucial Readiness Tests (Continued)

Does your response strategy:

5. Involve top management from the beginning?
6. Avoid the decisions and behaviors that cause failure?
7. Overcome common readiness deficiencies?
YOUR CEO’S IN HANDCUFFS! THINGS ARE GOING DOWN HILL, FAST! YOUR WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING TO SEE WHAT YOU DO NEXT.

Time matters. Your reputation and your job are on the line. Fail to manage it, and someone else -- the victims -- will!

In this industry-defining book on crisis management and leadership recovery, Jim Lukaszewski jump-starts the discussion by clearly differentiating a crisis from other business interruption events and introduces a concept rarely dealt with in crisis communication and operational response planning: managing the victim dimension of crisis.

Delivered in his straight-talking style backed with compelling case studies, Lukaszewski On Crisis Communication is your guide to preparing for a crisis and the explosive visibility that comes with it. In 10 chapters of field-tested how-to's and to-do's Lukaszewski teaches you:

• How crises create victims; • To avoid the toxicity of silence; • To overcome the abusive, intrusive and coercive behavior of bloviators, bellyachers, back-bench bitchers, the media, activists and critics; • To drive attorneys to settle instead of litigate; • Apology is the atomic energy of empathy; • Simple, sensible, sincere, constructive, positive techniques to reduce contention and to succeed!

NOW AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.COM
Thank you for attending!

Friday, April 11th, 2014

Crisis Proofing Your Organization:
How Your Crisis Plan Can Pass Seven Powerful Reputation Protecting Tests

By James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
CRISIS PROOFING YOUR ORGANIZATION:
How Your Crisis Plan Can Pass Seven Powerful Reputation Protecting Tests

Handout

Sponsored by
North Dakota Professional Communicators
Spring Conference 2014

Presented by
James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

Friday, April 11th, 2014
1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Central

Contents
- Communication Intentions
- Bad News Eradicator
- Managing the Victim Dimension
- Managing the Victim Dimension of Large-Scale Disasters
- Scenario Development Worksheets
- Seeking Forgiveness
- Profiles in Crisis Response Failure
COMMUNICATION INTENTIONS

1. **Candor**
   - Disclose, announce early.
   - Explain reasoning and reasons.
   - Discuss options, alternatives considered.
   - Provide unsolicited helpful information.

2. **Openness, accessibility**
   - Be available.
   - Be willing to respond.

3. **Truthfulness**
   - Point of reference matters more than facts.
   - Unconditional honesty, from the start.

4. **Apology**
   - Verbalize or write a statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow.
   - Acknowledge personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed, or wronged another.
   - Humbly ask for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.

5. **Responsiveness**
   - Every concern or question, regardless of the source, is legitimate and must be addressed.
   - Answer every question; avoid judging the questioner.
   - Avoid taking any question personally.
   - Build followers and be nice, even in the face of anger or aggressive negativity. Anger and arrogance create plaintiffs.

6. **Empathy**
   - Action always speaks louder than words.
   - Action illustrates concern, sensitivity, and compassion.
   - Act as though it was happening to you or someone you care about.

7. **Transparency**
   - Our behavior, our attitude, our plans, even our strategic discussions are unchallengeable, positive, and explainable.
   - Our families would be comfortable reading about our actions, decisions, and discussions on the front page of tomorrow’s newspaper.
   - No secrets (because important things and stupid stuff always come out).

8. **Engagement**
   - Face-to-face is the communications approach desired by just about everyone.
   - Those who challenge us most will require aggressive positive interaction.
   - Our base and those who give us permission to operate expect us to deal with unconvinceables and victims.
   - Direct interactive response, even negotiation, empowers the initiator.

9. **Clarification and Correction**
   - Relentlessly correct and clarify the record.
   - Prompt, positive, constructive elaboration of the facts preempts critics and empowers employees and supporters.
The Bad News Eradicator was designed to help eliminate defensive words and negative phrases from your speech and writing. Keep the document next your telephone. Take it with you when you travel. Collect your own set of habitual negative phrases and words. List them on the sheet, then create their positive equivalent and get a whole new life. The goal is to create a positive phrase that has the same or fewer words than the negative phrase.

The nature of this discipline, because that’s what it is, is to constantly and relentlessly translate and transform the energy of negative language into the power of positive speech or writing. Whenever you have a moment, simply work through the list and develop equivalent positive phrases for each negative phrase. There are many ways to accomplish this; sometimes a negative phrase has a half dozen or more positive equivalent options. The goal is to eradicate the negativity and gain a whole new power over your life.

<p>| 1. “Are not limited to . . . ” | “Include, among others . . . ” |
| 2. “Are not associated with . . . ” | “Are separate from . . . ” |
| 3. “Are not necessarily indicative.” | |
| 4. “Do not include . . . ” | “Only include . . . ” |
| 5. “Does not require . . . ” | |
| 6. “Does not sufficiently substitute . . . ” | |
| 7. “Does not exceed . . . ” | |
| 8. “Does not occur . . . ” | |
| 10. “Doesn’t hurt to ask.” | |
| 11. “Don’t worry, he won’t care.” | |
| 12. “Employees who no longer have an ownership . . . ” | |
| 13. “Entitled, but not obligated, to…” | |
| 14. “Generally does not vary.” | “Generally is consistent.” |
| 15. “Have not been registered . . . ” | |
| 16. “Have not yet made . . . ” | |
| 17. “He is not happy about this.” | “He’d rather see . . . ” |
| 18. “He’s not deranged . . . anymore.” | |
| 19. “I can’t comment on the past . . . I wasn’t there.” | “What I can tell you is . . . ” |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>“I can’t comment on what hasn’t happened.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>“I can’t say for sure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>“I can’t speak for them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>“I couldn’t help it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>“I don’t believe you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>“I don’t disagree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>“I don’t know.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>“I don't like that idea.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>“I don't mean to apologize.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>“I don't see the connection.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>“I wouldn’t say that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>“I wouldn't say you couldn’t do that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>“It is disappointing and misleading.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>“If adequate funds are not available.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>“If either of these events had not occurred . . . ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>“If you can’t refrain from . . . ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>“If you do not refrain from . . . ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>“If you do not wish . . . ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>“Investors are strongly cautioned not to place any reliance…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>“Is not eligible . . . ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>“It can't be done.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>“It didn't happen that way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>“It is unable to . . . ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>“It never happened.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>“It was unceremoniously rejected.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>“It wasn’t a good idea then, and it isn’t any better now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>“It wasn’t our intent to not be involved.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>“It won’t be any trouble at all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>“It won't be that way.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>“It won't work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>“It's not against company policy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>“It's never been done before.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>“It's not inappropriate.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>“It's not my responsibility.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>“It’s not the same.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>“It’s not unreasonable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>“It's not too expensive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>“It's not too much trouble.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>“It’s unlikely that he won’t disagree.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>“It’s not unlikely that people will come up with something we won’t do.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>“Let’s not be negative.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>“May not make changes.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2014, James E. Lukaszewski. All rights reserved.

For further information or reproduction permission, contact the copyright holder at jel@911.com.
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62.</td>
<td>“May not be covered.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63.</td>
<td>“Misrecollection is not impossible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64.</td>
<td>“Most likely to not achieve.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65.</td>
<td>“Must not be an ineligible corporation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.</td>
<td>“My answer is not no.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67.</td>
<td>“No.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68.</td>
<td>“No acquisitions are currently proposed.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69.</td>
<td>“No amendment may be made.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70.</td>
<td>“No, clearly we’re not doing it now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71.</td>
<td>“No comment.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72.</td>
<td>“No conflict of interest.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73.</td>
<td>“No increase or decrease is planned.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.</td>
<td>“No, it’s not wrong.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.</td>
<td>“No problem.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76.</td>
<td>“No revenue was generated.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.</td>
<td>“Not affiliated with . . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78.</td>
<td>“Affiliations are these . . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.</td>
<td>“Not permitted to be . . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.</td>
<td>“Let’s move on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81.</td>
<td>“Nothing is impossible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82.</td>
<td>“Everything is possible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83.</td>
<td>“Nothing was done.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.</td>
<td>“Notwithstanding the general limitations . . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.</td>
<td>“Options are not exercisable.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86.</td>
<td>“Our boss would never buy it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87.</td>
<td>“Our customers wouldn't like it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88.</td>
<td>“Our participation was never greater than theirs.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89.</td>
<td>“Our people would never do that.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90.</td>
<td>“Shouldn’t you have objected?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91.</td>
<td>“Some of which will not materialize.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92.</td>
<td>“That isn't our problem.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93.</td>
<td>“That wouldn’t work.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94.</td>
<td>“That's impossible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95.</td>
<td>“That's not a bad approach.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96.</td>
<td>“That's not a good question.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97.</td>
<td>“That's not been proven.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98.</td>
<td>“That's not our fault.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99.</td>
<td>“That’s not to say we can’t do it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100.</td>
<td>“That’s not true.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101.</td>
<td>“Here’s what’s true . . .”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102.</td>
<td>“That’s partly untrue.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103.</td>
<td>“That’s the wrong attitude.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104.</td>
<td>“That’s unhelpful and unnecessary.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105.</td>
<td>“The allegations are false, misleading, libelous, and absurd.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
105. “The company does not expect, nor can it guarantee . . . ”

106. “The company does not plan to . . . ”
107. “The company plans to . . . ”

108. “The company makes no representation or warranty . . . ”

109. “The company shall not terminate . . . ”
110. “The company shall not take any of the following actions.

111. “The company will be under no duty to give notification.”
112. “The company would not be able to . . . ”

113. “The forecasts should not be regarded as a representation.”

114. “The increasing inability . . . ”
115. “The information is not exhaustive.”

117. “The statements were not prepared with a view toward compliance.”
118. “There can be no assurance.”
119. “These committees do not set the final policy . . . ”

120. “They will have no further rights.”
121. “This is not about contract negotiation; we’re not talking about that.”

122. “This was not a regular occurrence.”
123. “A more likely occurrence is . . . ”

124. “Unable to attain.”
125. “Unable to complete.”

126. “Undue reliance should not be placed on . . . ”
127. “Unvested options may not vest . . . ”

128. “We aren't a bad company.”
129. “We can't change that fast.”

130. “We can't say that.”
131. “We decided not to do it.”

132. “We couldn't have known.”
133. “We decided not to do it.”

134. “We did all right without it.”
135. “We didn’t circumvent the rules.”

136. “We didn’t engage in that practice.”
137. “We didn't know.”

138. “We didn’t need to do that.”

139. “What we should have done was . . . ”

140. “We don't agree it’s unnecessary or unwarranted.”
| 140. | “We don't care.” |
| 141. | “We don't have enough studies.” |
| 142. | “We don't have the resources.” |
| 143. | “We don't have the time.” |
| 144. | “We don’t see it that way.” |
| 145. | “We meant nothing of the kind.” |
| 146. | “We never did that.” |
| 147. | “We shouldn’t get involved.” |
| 148. | “We won't have the money.” | “Money will be limited.” |
| 149. | “We're just too busy; we can't.” |
| 150. | “We’re not capable of that.” |
| 151. | “We're not ready for that.” |
| 152. | “Were not approved or disapproved.” | “It remains to be approved.” |
| 153. | “Why won't you use everything I say?” |
| 154. | “Will not be allowed to . . . ” |
| 155. | “Will not be revoked.” |
| 156. | “Will not become exercisable.” |
| 157. | “You can’t believe that.” |
| 158. | “You can’t make a mistake.” |
| 159. | “You have nothing to fear.” |
| 160. | “You may not take such information out.” | “Information you can remove is limited to . . . ” |
MANAGING THE VICTIM DIMENSION

Victims Are:
- People
- Animals
- Living systems

Victimization Is:
- Self-designating
- Self-maintaining
- Self-terminating

Causes of Victimization:
- Abuse
- Arrogance
- Bullying
- Callousness
- Carelessness
- Commission
- Confrontation
- Deception
- Discrediting
- Dismissiveness
- Disparagement
- Embarrassment
- Fear
- Lies
- Negligence
- Omission
- Sarcasm
- Shame
- Surprise

Victims Feel:
- Anger
  - Betrayal, disbelief, dread, excitability, and anxiety
- Frustration
  - Powerlessness, helplessness, fearfulness
- Inadequate
  - Walking but wounded, agonized, lonely, poor judgment
- Betrayal
  - Trust no one, no one to trust, irritable, anxious

Victim Reaction:
- Friendly gestures: Interpreted as threats
- Personal interest: Perceived as intrusions and betrayal
- Well meant advice: Perceived as insulting or controlling
Victims Suffer:

- Intellectual deafness
- 24/7 internal and external monologue
- Everything is a question

Victims Need:

- Validation
  - Preferably by the perpetrator
- Visibility
  - To describe their pain and warn others
- Vindication
  - Resolution that prevents the victimization of others
- Apology
  - Verbal or written admission of responsibility, the promise of amends

Victim Management Imperatives:

- Control your own sense of outrage and betrayal
- Keep the real victim’s circumstances in perspective
- Recognize the utter loneliness of victims, much of which they end up having to resolve themselves, by themselves, in their own time
- Be empathetic, keep at it, be helpful
- Anticipate and act ahead of patterns
- Recognize the deafness problem, repeat key information frequently
- Help move toward closure

If you’d like more information or equally interesting views, ideas, and concepts, contact the author’s Website at www.e911.com.
Managing the Victim Dimension of Large-Scale Disasters

JAMES E. LUKASZEWSKI

ABSTRACT: The most volatile component of all crisis response is victim management. Failure to promptly, humanely, and empathetically see that victims’ needs are met will eclipse an organization’s response, and even a flawless response will be remembered for its angry survivors, relatives, public officials, sometimes competitors, but almost always the critics. The two most crucial ingredients of crisis management are effective and accurate communication and then prompt resolution of the issues surrounding victims. This paper familiarizes and sensitizes technical expert readers with the extraordinary impact and emotional power victims bring to any crisis situation. Some important techniques and approaches are discussed, including the nature and causes of victimization and why victims have so much power; the behavior of management and its advisers that triggers, initiates, or prolongs victimization; what victims feel and why they tend to act and remain so upset; and what victims need—validation, visibility, vindication, and extreme empathy/apology—along with constructive strategies that can resolve these different situations quickly and often avoid litigation.

When disaster strikes, we do get glimpses of the physical and infrastructure damage, but the news and most of the pictures are about the victims. If anything, while the broken facility, structures, and topography of the land or substructure of the earth do get talked about, it is the relentless pictures, descriptions, interviews, commentary, and desperation of the victims that determine the coverage, the public consciousness, and the legacy of the tragedy. The most glaring deficiency in the crisis and business recovery plans I review each year is the absence of a victim management strategy.

Based on just over 30 years as a senior adviser to top management in crisis situations, it seems to me that almost every function in an organization in crisis focuses on its own activities or those directly allied to it and leaves the question of victim management to someone else. My major career focus has been management communication and leadership recovery, always within the context of some serious, urgent, or contentious situation (Lukaszewski 2005). I noticed early in my career that the main drivers of contention, confrontation, and conflict, aside from the news media, were generally the victims of the events at hand. They got the airtime, they got the print space, and they got the attention of government. Yet managements generally treated victims as perpetrators, malingerers, and people in search of cash. But I also noticed that victims, even more than critics, tended to dominate the outcomes of the crisis and problems I was working on. Victims had enormous power.

In 1999, an extraordinary article appeared in the December issue of the Annals of Internal Medicine, “Risk Management: Extreme Honesty May Be the Best Policy” (Kraman and Hamm 1999). This paper
described a 10-year study carried out by the Veterans Administration Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, for the purpose of determining how to resolve patient-related incidents in ways that might reduce litigation by patients and their families. In the intervening years, a lot has been written on the subject of extreme empathy, candor, and apology, mostly driven by insurance companies who have discovered that these empathetic techniques, promptly applied, can reduce and in many cases eliminate litigation and speed settlement.

Today the most crucial component of all crisis response, victim management, remains missing from most responses. Clearly, it is possible to respond to crisis with a nearly textbook technical performance. But failure to promptly, humanely, and empathetically see that victims’ needs are met will eclipse a flawless response, and instead the response will be remembered for its angry survivors, relatives, public officials, occasionally competitors, but almost always the critics, and the emotional voices of the victims.

The two most crucial ingredients of crisis management are effective and accurate communication and then prompt resolution of the issues surrounding victims. This paper familiarizes and sensitizes the technical expert reader with the extraordinary impact and emotional power victims bring to any crisis situation. Some important techniques and approaches will be discussed, including

- The nature of victimization, and why victims have so much power;
- The behavior of management and its advisers that triggers, initiates, or prolongs victimization;
- What victims need, along with constructive strategies that can resolve these different situations quickly and often avoid litigation;
- Who can be victims—people, animals, and living systems;
- Causes of victimization;
- What victims feel and why they tend to act and remain so upset;
- Three crucial states of the victim experience—intellectual deafness, 24/7 immersion, and endless questioning; and
- What victims need—validation, visibility, vindication, and extreme empathy/apology.

While this topic may seem far from the domain of the civil engineer and civil engineering issues in crisis, just remember Hurricane Katrina (2005), the 2007 I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, the 2011 tsunamis in Japan and Indonesia, the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, and even the Titanic disaster of 1912. All were clearly engineering and recovery challenges. However, the big stories, the lasting stories, were always about the victims.

The public memory of these events is rarely about the details of design failure or faulty construction. We remember the faces and the turmoil of the victims. Had the I-35W bridge collapsed without any impact on animals, people, or the surrounding environment, it would have been an interesting, probably 1- or 2-day story. Going forward, of all the disaster-related litigation, it is the litigation concerning restitution and resolution of victim issues that lasts the longest, costs the most, and has the highest profile. Your destiny and reputation will be defined by how you communicate and your treatment of victims far more than by any engineering solution you may accomplish or invent.

Let me prepare you for our conversation today with a little story. It’s from a legendary television series called Paper Chase. Perhaps some of you remember it. The lead actor was John Houseman. He played Professor Kingsfield, who taught a first-year law school course on contracts. There was a powerful vignette in one of the early episodes in which Professor Kingsfield, inspiring the class, said, “You come to me with minds of mush... and you leave here thinking like lawyers.” Well, let me warn you that for this particular subject, you begin to read this paper with a finely trained engineering mind, but you will finish reading with a mind full of powerful mush. So, get ready.

IT’S ABOUT VICTIMS

There are seven powerful reasons why managing victims is so difficult:

1. Victim behavior is emotional and, some would say, irrational.
2. Management is reluctant to promptly assume blame or responsibility, or even admit that errors have occurred.
3. Management’s obsession with results over something that is clearly emotional, and by and large immeasurable, forces them to appear antivictim, emotionless, and cold.
4. Management is poorly equipped to deal with emotional circumstances, given that training in anthropology, ethics, and managing emotional circumstances is almost nonexistent in engineering and business schools and in business life.
5. Expectations and performance measures of managers and management advisers are generally based on rational factors and leave little room for imprecise and often suspect emotional circumstances.

6. Management relies too heavily on peer pressure and legal advice to avoid apologizing or even expressing extreme empathy.

7. Managers and leaders responding with empathy and sympathy may be criticized as soft or sentimental.

To begin our discussion, we need three important definitions:

1. **Crisis**: I define a crisis as a people-stopping, show-stopping, product-stopping, reputation-defining, and trust-busting event that creates victims and/or explosive visibility. Crises are caused by human beings intentionally, through commission or omission, and sometimes unintentionally, through accident, negligence, or ignorance.

2. **Disasters**: Disasters can be defined as extraordinary circumstances generally caused by forces beyond the control of persons who could be identified and blamed. Disasters are generally natural events beyond human control—tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and incredibly powerful storms. Disasters produce victims, but unless responders act negatively, carelessly, or callously, there is far less potential for blame, bad news, or mindless victimization and collateral damage.

3. **Disaster transformed into crisis**: What transforms a disaster into a crisis are responders and leaders who foul up the management of victims.

Katrina was just a hurricane, a very big one, before it became a crisis for responders, government, and the environment. The I-35W collapse was a rather mindless engineering mishap, except that people were injured and killed as a part of the circumstances, and the drama associated with their rescue and recovery transformed that event into a crisis. The extraordinary devastation in Japan from earthquake-driven tsunamis in 2011 exposed extraordinary deficiencies in their readiness and recovery systems and especially in their nuclear facilities. In contrast, the massive devastation by tsunamis in Indonesia, in the same year, triggered a worldwide response. Even though thousands died and many more were left homeless and injured, the extraordinary response and the country’s own efforts really allowed this event to remain very solidly in the disaster category. One contradictory lesson is, as will be illustrated further, that even when victims appear to be treated reasonably, almost any disaster can quickly become a crisis.

**FIRST RESPONSE PRIORITIES**

To give this discussion context, it’s important to understand the power of first response priorities. First response priorities as executed can mitigate reputational damage. Successful crisis (victim-producing) response (victim reduction) is based on sensible, focused, constructive, and positive response option execution, fundamentally sound decision making, and action. Ignoring or shortcutting any of these priorities is what can turn a relatively minor incident into a major, long-term, uncontrollable, reputation-defining, and persistently negative series of events.

**MODEL GRAND FIRST RESPONSE STRATEGY**

- **Response Priority 1**: Stop the production of victims. Identify problems and set response priorities. Resolve the problem promptly; begin addressing key issues. If it’s leaking, foaming, smoking, burning, or otherwise creating victims, deal with the underlying problem first. Failure to stop producing victims makes your crisis response, no matter how competent, look weak, timid, clumsy, and, in fact, incompetent.

- **Response Priority 2**: Manage the victim dimension. It is victims and others who are directly affected that cause incidents to become crises. Be prepared to understand the dynamics of victims and anticipate those dynamics as the response process proceeds.

- **Response Priority 3**: Communicate with employees. Every employee becomes a communicator when something adverse happens. Whether there are 10 employees or 10,000 employees, when questionable activity or crisis occurs, everyone affected becomes a communicator. Inform, educate, and script employees promptly, using brief but frequent, short statements. The counterintuitive result of this strategy is that employees are generally far quieter and will allow management to move forward with its response.

- **Response Priority 4**: Contact and assist those indirectly affected. Every crisis causes damage, injury, or fear in a large number of individuals who are indirectly affected, including friends, families, relatives,
neighbors, regulators, governments, allied organizations, and interest groups. Your emergency may affect other agencies, or your problems may taint your relationship with an ally, allied organization, or interest group. Inform them very promptly.

- **Response Priority 5:** Deal with the self-appointed, the self-anointed, and the media. New and legacy. Today every crisis brings out individuals and organizations with their own agendas. Any crisis presents the opportunity to activate these agendas. Yes, the legacy news media can still bring substantial attention to a crisis and to the perpetrator. But today, everyone can be a reporter, with the potential to cover any crisis story from his or her own perspective, and it is the victims that will gather the attention, often using the smart-phone production centers of the new-media journalists.

The key concept to remember here is that each of these five steps must be activated in the first hour (the so-called golden hour), or first two hours, of any crisis. Those not activated will cause additional victims, questions, and misunderstandings, which the perpetrator will have to deal with as the crisis unfolds. In other words, act fast, because speed beats smart, every time. This paper deals with the first two priorities: stopping the production of victims and managing the victim dimension.

**MANAGEMENT CULTURE PREVENTS ADEQUATE VICTIM MANAGEMENT**

In America today, the process of becoming a leader, manager, or professional involves, in part, deliberate and calculated deemotionalization. This is the attitude and practice that only those actions and decisions that can be easily measured, quantified, or metricized are important. This approach generally ignores people and people issues and the things that happen to people or that people care about. Management culture simply deemphasizes and devalues anything that is difficult to quantify—that is, emotional or "soft."

On top of this, managers, leaders, and professionals are trained to discredit, discount, disregard, disrespect, and even demean virtually every kind of emotional expression. Peers, shareholders, and colleagues in the business community expect crisis-affected managers to tough it out and avoid looking like sissies, at least at first. It is okay to give in after victims have been ignored, insulted, demeaned, and slapped around a bit. The result is that management’s response to crisis often comes across as what it truly is—callous, arrogant, cold, and heartless. It is true that managers, leaders, and professionals are not compensated for their level of empathy, especially in crisis. The lesson is that what doesn’t get paid for doesn’t get done.

Our country’s business culture systematically avoids emotional issues. Business people are taught a kind of decision-making ritual—one in which even the most urgent decisions are made through a process of conflict, confrontation, and aggressive intellectual and verbal combat. Looked at through the lens of victimization, this approach is time consuming and distracts from the humane immediacy victim response requires. Too much delay, and the perceptions of arrogance, callousness, and culpability take over, especially if management hesitates, acts timidly, or is initially hostile and negative toward victims.

**WHAT THE BOSS SHOULD REALLY DO IN A CRISIS**

From another perspective, one of the more powerful weaknesses in crisis response is the lack of specific roles and assignments for top management. The result of this crucial gap in crisis management planning is the mismanagement, lack of management, or paralysis that afflicts crisis response efforts. This defect occurs all too frequently in plans I review, responses I analyze, and scenarios I explore with client companies.

In the course of directing crisis response, analyzing past responses to crisis, or developing powerful response strategies, it’s clear that crisis response promptness and effectiveness depend on having five essential responsibilities spelled out carefully in every crisis plan for the CEO and top management (or surviving leaders):

1. Assert the moral authority expected of ethical leadership.
2. Take responsibility for the care of victims.
3. Set the appropriate tone for the organizational response.
4. Set the organization’s voice.
5. Commit acts of leadership at every level.

Assert the Moral Authority Expected of Ethical Leadership

No matter how devastating or catastrophic the crisis is, in most cultures forgiveness is possible provided the organization, through its early behaviors and leadership, takes appropriate and expected steps to learn from and deal with the crisis-causing issues. The behaviors, briefly and in order, are as follows:
• Candor and disclosure (acknowledgment that something adverse has happened or is happening),
• Explanation and revelation about the nature of the problem (some early analysis),
• Commitment to communicate throughout the process (even if there are lots of critics),
• Empathy (intentional acts of helpfulness, kindness, and compassion),
• Oversight (inviting outsiders, even victims, to look over your shoulder),
• Commitment to zero (finding ways to prevent similar events from occurring again), and
• Restitution or penance (paying the price—generally doing more than would be expected, asked for, or required).

Take Responsibility for the Care of Victims
The single most crucial element in any crisis, aside from ending the victim-causing event, is managing the victim dimension. There are three kinds of victims: people, animals, and living systems. It’s top management’s responsibility to see that appropriate steps are taken to care for victims’ needs. This is both a reputation preservation and a litigation reduction activity. Most devastating responses to crises occur when victims are left to their own devices, when victims’ needs go unfulfilled, or when for whatever reasons (usually legal) the organization that created the victims refuses to take even the simplest of humane steps to ease the pain, suffering, and victimization of those afflicted. Out of all of the CEO’s essential responsibilities, taking a personal interest and an active role in the care of victims is the most important. Senior executives should maintain a positive, constructive pressure to get victim issues resolved promptly.

Set the Appropriate Tone for the Organizational Response
Tone refers to internal management behavior that helps the organization meet the expectations triggered by a crucial, critical, or catastrophic situation. If senior management takes on the posture of being attacked or victimized, the entire organization will react in the same way. Very rarely are large organizations and institutions considered victims. They’re generally considered to be the perpetrators at worst or arrogant bystanders at best.

It’s the most senior executives who need to set a constructive tone that encourages positive attitudes and language and prompt responses. This approach protects the organization’s relationships with various constituents during the response and recovery period, shows respect for victims, and reduces the threat of further trust or reputation damage.

Set the Organization’s Voice
Top management must put a face and a voice on the organization or institution as it moves through the crisis. This action is directed first toward the internal world, then second toward the external world—how you describe yourself, what you’re doing, how the response is going, what responsibilities you’re taking, and what outside scrutiny you’re inviting. Selecting a spokesperson who understands what the various publics and audiences are expecting, as well as what the various medias require, is essential in successfully managing the visibility of any crisis situation. The complexity of crises today, as well as the complexity of coverage, probably requires a range of expertise and more than one individual to be responsible, ready, and prepared to present an organization’s case internally and externally. Depending on the severity of the situation, this duty often falls to the chief executive. Generally, the more severe the level of damage and number of victims, the more senior the operating individual needs to be to become the face of the organization and its voice. The more extensive the crisis, the more likely it is that there will be a number of spokespeople, including professional communicators, subject matter experts, and operating executives.

The weight of crisis management falls most heavily on organizational leaders and leadership, primarily the chief executive. Recent trends demonstrate that no matter how effectively a chief executive leads the response to a crisis situation, the likelihood seems extremely high that this person will be relieved of his or her duties at some point relatively soon, often well before the crisis itself is totally resolved. Even if a senior executive has someone else carry out these duties, public expectations have been shaped toward placing blame on and seeking retribution from the highest individual on duty at the time of the circumstance.

Commit Acts of Leadership at Every Level
Leaders acting like leaders have significance during urgent situations. Senior executives should literally walk around and talk to people. They should encourage, suggest, knock down barriers, and help everyone stay focused on the ultimate goals of the response process. Random acts of leadership are always welcome in any environment, but especially during crisis. Rather than huddling in their executive offices trying to
CRISES AND DISASTERS CREATE MANY KINDS OF VICTIMS

Almost every postmortem on crisis communication failure and management decision-making deficiencies identifies the failure to promptly address victims as the emotionally negative energizing force that causes trust to break down. Bad news of any consequence is about victims and victimization, or the potential for both.

When the emotionality of victimization meets the rational decision-making regimentation of management, there will almost always be casualties in top management. In every recent high-profile disaster and crisis, one expected casualty among the responders is the person on whose watch the bungled disaster response occurred.

Some Cannot Be Victims

Unless they are directly attacked or obviously adversely affected, corporations and large organizations, like government agencies, are almost never, from a public perspective, considered victims. Yes, Tylenol was a victim of a product tampering murderer in 1982 in Chicago and in 1986 in Westchester County, New York. Yes, the airlines whose planes were hijacked and flown into the World Trade Center in 2001 were victims. The syringe tampering incidents in 1993 made Pepsi, an icon American brand, a victim for 7 days. The government building bombed in Oklahoma City in 1996 was also a victim. Yes, there are circumstances—although very few in number—where one could genuinely consider a large organization and its leadership to be victims.

Generally speaking, however, it is more likely that large organizations that cause or fumble the response to a disaster will be immediately viewed as perpetrators, or at least as having culpability in the creation of victims. In these situations, it is equally true, but perhaps not as intuitively apparent, that some employees are victims in every scenario. If the response of the organization is to stumble, mumble, fumble, and bumble, any opportunity for the perpetrator to be perceived as a victim is lost.

While civil engineers may actually be on the periphery of the victim response, they are trusted advisers to those who do or direct the responding. Understanding the victim dimension helps advisers keep those at the center of the response focused on what needs to be done and on reducing the production of future victims. Management advisers, like attorneys and other professionals, need to recognize the crucial and important realities of the victim dimension and be prepared to coach management for victim response readiness and for the important humane behaviors required as disasters unfold.

Who Can Be a Victim?

There are three kinds of victims: people, animals, and living systems. Living systems are things like estuaries, deserts, jungles, rain forests, river valleys, and someone’s own backyard. The fact is, you can blow something up, burn something down, or otherwise destroy something, but so long as no one is injured or killed, no animals are injured or killed, and no one’s living system is harmed, the situation may be bad news, but it is not a crisis. Instead, it could be a disaster or simply a bad day or problem for someone’s schedule, budget, reputation, or career. All crises are problems, but very few problems are crises.

CAUSES OF VICTIMIZATION

In the list of causes of victimization in Fig. 1, it’s a little surprising to note that the vast majority of causes of victimization are communications related. Only three items on this list are physical in nature: abuse, assault, and bullying. And most bullying is verbal in nature. Keep in mind that all of the areas come into play as a disaster (or crisis) unfolds over a period of time. In order to effectively reduce the production of victims, all early response thinking and action must take into account what causes victimization in the first
place and end the production of victims as early as possible. In 2011, the British Petroleum oil leak, which occurred more than 5,000 ft below the surface of the Gulf of Mexico, took more than 100 days to stop. That’s more than 100 days of victim production.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A VICTIM?**

*Victimhood is a self-designated state.* Whether there are wounds, bullet holes, or any other visible or invisible damage, humans have the capacity to choose to feel victimized. They can also choose to be victimized on behalf of other people, animals, or living systems.

I’ve worked with victims in many parts of the world, and all seem to have very similar behaviors. Most of those injured, whatever the cause, tend to get up off the ground, dust themselves off, and try to figure out how to get home, get the kids home from school, get dinner made, and get back to work or their regular lives the following day. In the context of this article, victims are those who act on their victimization. They locate an attorney, call a local news channel, or find or initiate a support group process to help them almost before they get up off the ground or once they get to a place of safety. Those who are truly victims, those acting on their victimization, are generally extremely small in number. It is a self-designated state.

One response I often hear is, “Wait a minute, Jim. Someone gets their leg crushed by some flying debris; they have a head injury and have difficulty remembering where they are and who they are. These are not victims?” The answer is, in this discussion, victims are those who act on their victimization, hire a lawyer, go to the media, begin or join an advocacy group, or take some action other than getting medical help in support of their injuries or other necessary help to correct their situation. Even in mass casualty situations, victimization is an individual circumstance. It’s the trial lawyers who work to get these people into groups for the purpose of legal action, media response, or other kinds of attention. Even that’s quite difficult to accomplish. Most victims desire simply to get on with it and get their life back on track.

*Victimhood is self-sustaining.* Being a victim is a self-perpetuating state. That is, it is up to the individual to choose how long he or she will remain in a situation or state of mind that makes him or her feel victimized. Insurance companies are usually the ones who drive trying to limit the length of time a person can be a victim. It’s done by setting arbitrary standards; for example, a broken arm might be worth $500 and a day off work. The problem is that being a victim is much more complicated. For example, if the arm got broken by a coworker twisting it until it snapped, and the victim hid in her office for 4½ hours out of fear before she sought help with her injury, this broken arm is likely to be much more than a $500 day off work. The circumstances of victimization are crucially important. Despite the pressure of insurance companies, corporate legal staffs, and outside counsel hired to contain and more promptly end the victim experience, victims get to be victims as long they feel victimized.

*Victimhood is self-terminating.* Victimhood ends or abates when the victims, largely by themselves, begin to come to terms with or let go of what is affecting them and get on with the rest of their lives. No matter how damaging an event, only a small number of individuals continue to act on their feelings and emotions of being victimized. Some may begin their recovery by blaming others for their feelings of helplessness, demoralization, frustration, or betrayal. Most injured or wounded just suck it up and deal with it.

*Victims suffer alone.* Even though there may be mass casualty circumstances in which many are injured or wounded at the same time, each person suffers alone. Even the phrase “mass casualties” is a serious, sometimes devastating mischaracterization. Every person suffers differently, experiences pain differently, and needs to be treated individually. Bob VandePol, president of Crisis Care Network of Grandville, Michigan, and a global expert on critical incident response, said recently that current trauma research strongly emphasizes that “how people make sense of what happened to them and their experience of posttrauma symptoms is a strong predictor of their outcomes” (personal communication, March 14, 2012; see also VandePol and Beyer 2009).

Too often, the victimization, the sense of frustration, and the sense of helplessness and being misunderstood persist because the perpetrators, the media, the bloviators and commentators, and sometimes society lump individual circumstances together...
into joint suffering too quickly. This is very frustrating to victims. Each victim suffers by himself or herself.

THE VOCABULARY OF VICTIMIZATION

As any seasoned investigator will tell you, if appropriately questioned and listened to, the language people use in adverse circumstances can be diagnostic of their situation. In the case of victims, there is specific vocabulary that crops up constantly that validates the fact that they truly are victims of the circumstances as they claim to be. The language victims use to illustrate their circumstances frequently includes the following terms:

- Anger: betrayal, disbelief, dread, anxiousness, anxiety.
- Frustration: powerlessness, helplessness, fearfulness.
- Inadequacy: self-blame, agonizing, lonely, luckless, worrying.
- Betrayal: trust no one, no one to trust, irritable, anxious.

VICTIM BEHAVIOR IS PREDICTABLE: KEY INDICATORS

Victims’ behaviors are driven by extraordinarily powerful emotions. Being a victim is, in my judgment, the most highly emotionalized state a human being can achieve. To the observer, many of these individuals seem to be so caught up in their circumstances that they are acting irrationally. Most critical incident response experts recoil at this characterization. But those in corporations and organizations who are creating victims tend to look at victims’ behaviors this way. In the minds of the perpetrator, the victim is behaving this way intentionally to gain power and compensation.

This is one of the extraordinary realities of being a victim—their behavior comes across as an irrational state. Perhaps the single most important reason victims are created is because those trying to help them are approaching themrationally when the victims themselves are emotionally energized and intellectually confused.

In fact, the behavior of victims is often quite puzzling. For example, friendly gestures are often interpreted as threats. The interests of someone trying to help may be perceived as intrusive or as a betrayal. Well-meant advice, even sensible advice, is often perceived as insulting or controlling. There is a pattern of victim behaviors beyond those that are clearly recognizable that need to be understood as a part of dealing with those who are victimized and for preventing additional injured, threatened individuals from becoming victims.

THE THREE SIMULTANEOUS STATES OF VICTIMIZATION

Victims become intellectually deaf. When people are victimized, the first thing that happens is our inner voice begins shouting, interpreting what happened, how stupid we were, and how careless we probably had to be to get into this kind of jam. Our outer voice (the one everyone else can hear) is telling others about what we are suffering, what is happening to us, and warning others about avoiding what happened to us. This is what often makes dealing with victims so difficult. Victims instantly become self-absorbed and self-focused on the problems and afflictions that being a victim causes. They hear little. Their inner voice continuously rehearses their problems and circumstances. They use their outer voice to complain, whine, and warn. They notice little, and they are primarily stimulated by additional negative information about their circumstances or similar ideas and by people trying to help them.

Victims are emotionally engaged 24/7. Put yourself in their place. If you are an adult, you have experienced being victimized by something or someone. Once it happened to you, you were consumed by it, at least for a time. It is this 24/7 focus that gives victims their power. Their relentless suffering and communication about it can overcome even the most empathetic organizational efforts, for a while.

Everything is a question. When the victims’ inner voice and outer voice are working at the same time, these individuals are incapable of taking in new information. So they ask questions. Victims generally, and repeatedly, ask the same questions, like “Who’s responsible?” “Why did this happen to me?” “Why couldn’t this have been prevented?” “Why didn’t someone head off this problem before it happened?” “Who is going to pay all my bills while I suffer these problems?” “Why didn’t you warn me if you knew this could happen?”

Despite the responder’s most humane efforts to respond, until victims can focus on their own recovery, they tend to ask the same questions repeatedly. Responders and helpers must learn to answer these questions repeatedly until the victim can absorb the answer.
**Victim-Creating Perpetrator Behaviors Are Also Predictable**

Victim-creating behaviors cause most litigation. They are identifiable and preventable. Here are seven victim-causing perpetrator behaviors I refer to as "Profiles in Jell-O" (a pun on the title of President John F. Kennedy’s book *Profiles in Courage*):

1. **Denial**: Refusal to accept that something bad has happened and that there may be victims or others directly affected who require prompt public acknowledgment. There is denial that the crisis is serious; denial that the media or public has any real stake or interest in whatever the problem happens to be; denial that the situation should take anyone’s time in the organization except those in top management specifically tasked to deal with it; denial that the problem is of any particular consequence to the organization provided no one talks about it except those directly involved. “Let’s not overreact.” “Let’s keep it to ourselves.” “We don’t need to tell the people in public affairs and public relations just yet. They’ll just blab it all over.” “If we don’t talk, no one will know.”

2. **Victim confusion**: Irritable reaction to reporters, employees, angry neighbors, whistle-blowers, and victims’ families when they call asking for help, information, explanation, or apology. “Hey! We’re victims too.” Symptoms include time-wasting explanations of how “we’ve been such good corporate citizens,” how “we’ve contributed to the opera [the Little League, the shelter program].” “We don’t deserve to be treated this badly.” “Mistakes can happen, even to the best of companies.” “We’re only human.” When these behaviors don’t pass the community, media, or victim straight-face test or are criticized or laughed at, a stream of defensive threats follows: “If the government enforces new regulations, they will destroy our competitiveness.” “If we have to close this plant, it’s their fault.” “It’s the only decision we can make.” “If this decision stands, many more will suffer needlessly.” “If we didn’t do this, someone else would.” “We didn’t tell them because we wanted to spare them the additional fear and agony.”

3. **Testosterosis**: Looking for ways to hit back, to "slap some sense" into "them" rather than deal with problems and emotional circumstances.

Managers may refuse to give in or to respect those who have a difference of opinion or a legitimate issue. Another testosterosis indicator is the use of military terminology—tactics, strategy, enemy, beachhead, attack, retreat, and truce—all of which trigger a more insensitive, macho internal environment. This command-and-control mentality sets the stage for predictable errors, omissions, and mistakes and creates resistance to what is truly needed.

4. **Arrogance**: Reluctance to apologize, express concern or empathy, or take appropriate responsibility. “If we do that, we’ll be liable.” “We’ll look weak.” “We’ll set bad precedents.” “There’ll be copycats.” “We’ll legitimize bad actions or people.” “We can’t give them what they don’t deserve.” Arrogance is contempt for adversaries, sometimes even for victims, and almost always for the news media. It is the opposite of empathy.

5. **Blame shifting, search for the guilty**: Attempts to identify traitors, turncoats, troublemakers, those who push back, and the unconvinceables to shift the blame back to the perpetrators. “They simply weren’t hurt enough to warrant the demands they’re making.” “The allegations are outrageous, not provable, and self-serving.” “Obviously, these people have their own agenda, and we have become the victim of it.”

6. **Fear of exposure**: Fear that arises when those who should have been communicating recognize that a tremendous gap has been created in their credibility and in their ability to be trusted and that it will be nearly impossible to explain their way back again for having been silent, or only minimally communicative, for such a long period of time. This fear is reflected in angry, callous responses to bad news coverage, employee animosity, and humiliating, embarrassing, and damaging questions by the media and victims, such as “What did you know, and when did you know it?” “What have you done, and when did you do it?” Angry, callous responses create even more victims or harden the attitudes of existing victims. And attack plaintiff attorneys line up.

7. **Management by whining around**: The organizational tendency to talk only about its own pain, expense, and inconvenience when the decision is made to make some accommodation and move toward settlement. Whining makes victims, employees, neighbors, and the government
angrier and the media more aggressively negative, creating even more plaintiffs and accusations. Whining is never an effective strategic tool or strategy.

**SERIOUS VICTIM-CREATING MANAGEMENT ERRORS**

_Silence is the most toxic strategy._ It empowers and energizes victims. Where there’s trouble, lawyers routinely keep their clients from talking, and managers and leaders would rather avoid conveying negative news. The result is a toxic silence where there should be robust conversations and engagement. The most predictable casualty of silence during these major adverse events will usually be the chief executive of the perpetrators organization, and perhaps others. Silence creates gaps in the unfolding sequence of events. These silences are simply not acceptable, and they turn out to be impossible to explain with a straight face once they have occurred. Silence negatively magnifies every mistake and corrective action.

_Failure to engage creates victims._ Managers often believe and say that if they answer the questions of “these people” or comment on “their issues,” they give victims power and recognition they may not deserve and will hurt the organization in the long run. This is devastatingly stupid thinking. Victims come packed with the power to change the course of an organization and even reorganize and replace its top management. A single victim, driven by the negatrive or nonresponse of perpetrators and callous organizations, and probably ignored by the very people who should be communicating, can have the power, the determination, and the commitment to make important changes in organizations, political structures, communities of interest, and sometimes even a culture. Perpetrators can decrease the power of victims through simple, sensible, positive, constructive, and prompt response to victims’ needs.

_Stand up, delay, and acting timidly create victims._ Speed beats smart every time. Waiting to act until an appropriate level of factual information is available is a foolish decision. The longer an organization waits to do something that needs to be done, the more likely it is that whatever it does will be insufficient, unfocused, off-point, outside the target zone, and defensive. Excuses will have to be made for the resulting delay. The metric of my experience is that as a crisis persists, responders spend 50% of their energy and 25% of their resources fixing the bad decisions made yesterday. Having said that, the most worrisome decisions and poorest strategies are those that require waiting to do something until more is known. One of the most significant ways to reduce the production of victims is to do meaningful things immediately. It is essential to your credibility and to the level of public and victim trust, even if mistaken and likely to be changed. Action beats inaction every time. Faster is smarter.

**WHAT VICTIMS NEED**

Victims have four powerful needs: validation, visibility, vindication, and extreme empathy/apology. If these four needs are provided promptly—preferably by the perpetrator—victims will more easily move through their state of victimization and be less likely to call or respond to attorneys or the media, or even to call attention to themselves. The reality is that if the perpetrator fails to meet their needs or does so only partially, victims will find ways to provide for their own needs, often at the perpetrator’s reputational expense.

Victims require validation that they are indeed victims. This recognition is best rendered by the perpetrator. If not, public groups, government, or the news media will do it. Victims will seek it. “I’m not crazy, this really did happen, and someone else is responsible.” Victims rarely sue because they are angry, because their life has been changed dramatically, or because lots of plaintiff attorneys are chasing them around. Generally, victims sue because their situation is not acknowledged and their feelings are ignored, belittled, or trivialized. If they are prevented from publicly discussing what happened to them in meaningful ways, and no one is taking prompt constructive action to prevent similarly situated individuals, animals, or living systems from suffering the same fate, victims will be looking to take more aggressive action.

Visibility involves a platform from which victims can describe their pain and warn others. Preferably, again, the platform should come from the perpetrator or a credible independent organization that can help victims explain what happened for the purpose of both talking it out and convincing others to avoid similar risks or take appropriate preventive action. Some victimization lasts a lifetime. In the case of major disasters, invariably there will be monuments, remembrance sites, even living memorials that victims, survivors, and responders visit, talk about, and rely on. These are permanent visible symbols that recognize, redescribe, and remind the world of the suffering and sacrifice that took place. Name any major disaster...
dating back hundreds of years, and there is a memorial someplace, perhaps a place of worship, a graveyard, even some extraordinary monuments. And even to this day you’ll find tourists, relatives, survivors, and responders at these places, visiting and coping.

Vindication occurs when victims take credit for any actions the perpetrator takes to ensure that whatever happened to them will never be allowed to happen to others. Victims will describe these remedial actions and decisions as proof that they had an impact and that their suffering will now benefit others because of these new decisions, actions, and practices. Let it happen; let them take credit. It’s part of their rehabilitation and part of the restoration of the perpetrator’s reputation.

Victims need extreme empathy/apology. Apology is the atomic energy of empathy. If you want to stop bad news almost dead in its tracks, apologize. If you want to generally stop litigation and move to settlement, apologize. If you want to dramatically decrease the newsworthiness of almost any adverse situation, apologize. If you want to demonstrate that you truly care about the victims or the victimization you caused, apologize. While the lawyers may strongly advise against any form of apology because, under law, an apology is an admission, there is a growing body of evidence and data to demonstrate that apologies, promptly and sincerely delivered, virtually eliminate the potential for litigation. This means that while the lawyer’s advice needs to be listened to, if the victim refuses to sue, it may be time to find a lawyer to negotiate an effective settlement rather than pursuing a futile effort to deny what the victim needs most—acknowledgment through settlement.

Apology Strategies Remain Controversial
Perhaps the most dramatic ongoing example of the power of apology is happening in the U.S. health care industry. Forced by their insurance carriers, these institutions have learned the power of apology or of extreme empathy. Evidence grows every single day that apologies eliminate the desire to litigate. Thirty-four U.S. states have “I’m Sorry” laws in place to protect physicians and health care workers who apologize during malpractice litigation. Such apologies are inadmissible as evidence in setting damages. The exact statute terms do vary state by state. Even more states have similar laws in place that make voluntary apologies at automobile accidents inadmissible as evidence for setting liability and damage awards. For more helpful information on the power of apologies, here are some important references:

- A pioneering article published in *Annals of Internal Medicine* in December 1999 outlined a litigation risk reduction strategy instituted by the Veterans Administration (Kraman and Hamm 1999). In this strategy, when mistakes, errors, and adverse outcomes have occurred, apologies are offered, and the patient is then kept in the information loop and constantly updated.
- The *National Law Journal* (nlg.com) publishes articles on this issue a couple of times every year, following hospitals in Michigan, Texas, and other locations who are studying the impact of apologies on the reduction of litigation, risk, and liability.
- Sorryworks.net is a website that chronicles the successes and failures of the use of apology throughout the health care industry.
- Advice on how to apologize is available at theperfectapology.com, or simply search “apology” on your favorite browser.
- CrisisCare.com is an organization specializing in victim response that provides assistance to companies and organizations worldwide.

Fake and Phony Apologies Turn Out to be Humiliating, Embarrassing Failures
If an organization wants to make matters worse, the easiest way, since victims, employees, customers, regulators, and public policymakers are all expecting a sincere apology, is to fake one or to deny that one is even needed. There is probably a one-credit course in management school on apology avoidance strategies. Such a course would teach four lame but often used strategies. Strategy 1 is self-forgiveness:

- It’s an industry problem; we’re not the only ones.
- This isn’t the first time this has happened, and it won’t be the last.
- Let’s not blow this out of proportion.
- We couldn’t have known.
- It’s not systemic.
- Don’t our good deeds count for something?

Strategy 2 is self-talk (excuses we use that only we believe, but others doubt immediately):

- It’s an isolated incident.
- It couldn’t have been done by our people.
- Not very many were involved.
- If we don’t do it, someone else will.
- Let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

Strategy 3 is self-delusion:

- It’s not our fault.
- It’s not our problem.
• We can’t be responsible for everything.
• It won’t happen again.
• It was only one death, in one place, at one time.
  Why is everyone so angry?
• Life can’t exist without risk.

Finally, Strategy 4 is lying:
• I don’t know.
• We’ve never done that.
• It hasn’t happened before.
• It can’t happen to you.
• We won’t give up without a fight.
• We are not crooks.
• We did not have sex with that woman.

Apology avoidance is ingrained in management and very difficult to combat. However, when the situation arises, you should share these avoidance strategies with top executives and their advisers to inoculate them against using them. Let me warn you, though: The urge for avoidance is so strong that top managers will begin thinking up new strategies and excuses, beyond your most recent list, immediately. As you hear new avoidance language, build another list and circulate it immediately.

THE SEVEN MAJOR LESSONS IN THIS ARTICLE

1. The news will be bad from the beginning. This bad news will ripen badly for a time regardless of how aggressive, constructive, credible, and truthful your actions, decisions, and behaviors are.
2. It is the number-one task of disaster management to end the production of victims at the earliest possible time. Speed beats smart every time.
3. Managing the victim dimension is more crucial than even the most creative, constructive, and effective engineering strategy for recovery.
4. Even the most brilliant, comprehensive, effective response, if communicated poorly, with hesitation and timidity, arrogance, or annoyance, will be characterized forever as a poorly executed, timid, clumsy, arrogant response.
5. Silence is toxic, even while searching for or exploring appropriate response options. Your brightest idea and potential success advantage will be lost, even derided, if you hesitate to speak and act promptly. Gaps in communication are always interpreted to mean that you are hiding or covering up, and those questions or assumptions tend to last forever.
6. Perpetrators can decrease the power of victims through simple, sensible, positive, constructive, and prompt response to victim needs.
7. Apology is the atomic energy of empathy. Failing to apologize promptly or, worse, faking or feigning apology will create even more victims, critics, damage, and embarrassing questions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Material in this paper was adapted with permission from the book Lukaszewski on Crisis Communications (Lukaszewski 2012) (ISBN 978-1-931332-57-6), to be published by Rothstein Associates Inc. (www.rothstein.com, info@rothstein.com) in September 2012.

REFERENCES


James E. Lukaszewski is president of the Lukaszewski Group (www.e911.com), a division of Risdall Public Relations, New Brighton, MN. He is among the most prolific authors of crisis management communication education in America today. Corporate Legal Times listed Jim as one of the “28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose,” and PR Week named him as one of 22 “crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis.” He can be contacted at jel@e911.com.
### SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

**Copyright © 2014, James E. Lukaszewski**

**Instructions for Use:**

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed *flowchart of events*, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

**KEY ISSUE**

**SITUATION**

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

---

**ANALYSIS**

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

---

**OPTIONS**

Develop at least three response options for the situation you’ve presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

---

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This is what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes and why.

---

**UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you’ve suggested or by doing nothing.
## Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed flowchart of events, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

### KEY ISSUE

**Drug raid on a branch plant**

### SITUATION

*Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.*

- Feds and state authorities raided the second shift.
- Twenty-six employees were taken into custody.
- Media were tipped and went in with police.
- Story is all over the television and radio.
- Employees believe that we knew about the drug problem, but didn’t do anything about it.

### ANALYSIS

*Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.*

- We looked like we were afraid or reluctant to act.
- Everyone who worked there seemed to know more about the situation than we did.
- Drugs are manufactured in an old part of the plant.
- There may be some who weren’t caught (ringleaders).
- There’s fear among employees that it’s not over.

### OPTIONS

*Develop at least three response options for the situation you’ve presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.*

- Reveal that we worked with cops to set up raid.
- Provide counseling for innocent employees.
- Try to save those who are victims.
- Make sure ringleaders get punished.
- Let the cops handle it.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

*This is what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes and why.*

- Work to reduce tension in the facility.
- Keep police collaboration confidential since we need to catch everyone.
- Establish employee committee to set rules to prevent future occurrences.

### UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

*List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you’ve suggested or by doing nothing.*

- Get more bad press.
- Good employees leave.
- Become known as a “gang” place.
- Lose customers.
Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed flowchart of events, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

**KEY ISSUE**

**Employee violence**

**SITUATION**

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

- Former co-worker got past security with a gun.
- Former employee shoots former girlfriend in the lunchroom.
- Former employee holds other employees hostage.

**ANALYSIS**

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

- Employees are rattled.
- Police have taken over scene.
- News reporters call all over the place.
- We are all paralyzed.
- People don’t know what to do or where to go.

**OPTIONS**

Develop at least three response options for the situation you’ve presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

- Let police handle most of it (it is a crime scene).
- Focus on employee shock and discomfort.
- Help families of the afflicted, as well as those who are bystanders.
- Find a way to assess impact on co-workers.
- Find a way to assess impact on company.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

This is what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes and why.

- One, two, and three ... and try to bring in counselors to help people by talking through what they’ve experienced and what they feel.
- There must be an empathetic, positive response by top management to employees to set emotions down.
- Should there be a memorial or remembrance services?

**UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES**

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you’ve suggested or by doing nothing.

- Lack of action could adversely affect employee moral.
- Lack of action could trigger similar events.
- Lack of action sends message that we don’t care.
SCENARIO DEVELOPMENT WORKSHEET

Copyright © 2014, James E. Lukaszewski

Instructions for Use:

Use this form to sketch out brief scenarios that are “quick take” analyses of specific key issues or critical situations/events your organization might face. These scenarios are basic thinking and analytical tools in the development of a more detailed flow chart of events, which will depict the major events, steps, and decision points leading to the resolution of your key issue.

KEY ISSUE

Leaking underground fuel tank

SITUATION

Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation.

- Local wells have been polluted with unleaded gasoline.
- XYZ Company and two other companies are suspected culprits.

ANALYSIS

Briefly describe what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens your organization.

- If we are responsible, then we will look careless; it will look like the big corporation stepping on the little guy.
- If we aren’t responsible, we can demonstrate our concern for our neighbors by helping out – providing bottled water.

OPTIONS

Develop at least three response options for the situation you’ve presented. You could suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from.

- Begin bottled water campaign/immediate testing/door-to-door effort to reach community.
- Begin testing/speaking to neighbors and “victims” about our position (be conservative).
- Do nothing (except what is required by law).

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes and why.

Begin bottled water campaign/immediate testing/door-to-door grassroots effort to talk to our neighbors. Let them know we’re there and can be reached easily. Warn people what to look for.

UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES

List here those events or problems that could arise due to the options you’ve suggested or by doing nothing.

- If we aren’t responsible but take responsibility, we might open ourselves to lawsuits or other legal action.
- We may create perception that we are responsible for the leak when we aren’t.
SEEKING FORGIVENESS

Obtaining forgiveness involves completing the nine steps below. To achieve success in the shortest possible time, these steps must be completed in the order presented, as quickly as possible. Seeking forgiveness is society’s requirement for relationship, trust, and credibility restoration. Adverse situations remediated faster cost a lot less, are controversial for much shorter periods of time, suffer less litigation, and help the victims come to closure more quickly.

**Step #1 Candor:** Outward recognition, through promptly verbalized public acknowledgement, that a problem exists; that people or groups of people, the environment, or the public trust are affected; and that something will be done to remediate the situation.

**Step #2 Extreme empathy/Apology:** Verbalized or written statement of personal regret, remorse, and sorrow, acknowledging personal responsibility for having injured, insulted, failed or wronged another, humbly asking for forgiveness in exchange for more appropriate future behavior and to make amends in return.

**Step #3 Explanation** (no matter how silly, stupid, or embarrassing the problem-causing error was): Promptly and briefly explain why the problem occurred and the known underlying reasons or behaviors that led to the situation (even if we have only partial early information).

**Step #4 Affirmation:** Talk about what you’ve learned from the situation and how it will influence your future behavior. Unconditionally commit to regularly report additional information until it is all out or until no public interest remains.

**Step #5 Declaration:** A public commitment and discussion of specific, positive steps to be taken to conclusively address the issues and resolve the situation.

**Step #6 Contrition:** The continuing verbalization of regret, empathy, sympathy, even embarrassment. Take appropriate responsibility for having allowed the situation to occur in the first place, whether by omission, commission, accident, or negligence.

**Step #7 Consultation:** Promptly ask for help and counsel from “victims,” government, the community of origin, independent observers, and even from your opponents. Directly involve and request the participation of those most directly affected to help develop more permanent solutions, more acceptable behaviors, and to design principles and approaches that will preclude similar problems from re-occurring.

**Step #8 Commitment:** Publicly set your goals at zero. Zero errors, zero defects, zero dumb decisions, and zero problems. Publicly promise that to the best of your ability situations like this will never occur again.

**Step #9 Restitution:** Find a way to quickly pay the price. Make or require restitution. Go beyond community and victim expectations, and what would be required under normal circumstances to remediate the problem.
January 2014          FILE: Crisis Communication Management & Simulations

TO: Executive Addressed
FR: James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
RE: Profiles in Failure: Behavior Patterns That Perpetuate Trouble

Sometimes the only way to help organizations avoid embarrassment, humiliating visibility, enormous litigation, and just plain stupidity is to illustrate dramatically the pattern of behaviors and attitudes that lead to catastrophic reputational trouble. I call this pattern “Profiles in Failure.” These behaviors can be easily recognized and their impact predicted. If you are looking for trouble, here’s the way to quickly multitask your way into long-term difficulty.

1. **Denial:** Refuse to accept the fact that something bad has happened and that there may be victims or other direct effects that require prompt public acknowledgement.

2. **Victim Confusion:** Irritable reaction to reporters, angry neighbors, and victims’ families when they call asking for help, information, explanation, or apology. “Hey! We’re victims too.”

3. **Testosterosis:** Look for ways to hit back, rather than to deal with the problem. Refuse to give in, refuse to respect those who may have a difference of opinion or a legitimate issue.

4. **Arrogance:** Reluctance to apologize, express concern or empathy, or to take appropriate responsibility because, “If we do that, we’ll be liable,” or, “We’ll look like sissies,” or, “We’ll set a precedent,” or, “There will be copycats.”

5. **Search for the Guilty:** Shift blame anywhere you can while digging into the organization, looking for traitors, turncoats, troublemakers, those who push back, and the unconvinceables.

6. **Fear of the Media:** As it becomes more clear that the problem is at least partly real, the media begin asking, “What did you know, and when did you know it?”, “What have you done, and when did you do it?”, and other humiliating, embarrassing, and damaging questions for which there are no really good, truthful answers anymore because you have stalled so long.

7. **Whining:** Head down, finger in your navel, shuffling around, whining, and complaining about how bad your luck is, about being a victim of the media, zealous do-gooders, wacko-activists, or people don’t know anything; about how people you don’t respect have power; and, that you “don’t get credit” for whatever good you’ve already contributed.

Execute these behaviors in any order and I guarantee trouble, serious reputation problems, and brand damage. By the time you recover – if you do – some career-defining moments and a new team may replace you and yours.
JAMES E. LUKASZEWSKI, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

www.e911.com

James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) advises, coaches, and counsels the men and women who run very large corporations and organizations through extraordinary problems and critical high-profile circumstances. The bulk of his practice is in the U.S., Canada, and South America although he has clients from many parts of the world.

He is an expert in managing and reducing contention, counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications and institutional issues. He counsels leaders facing serious internal and external problems involving: activist counteraction; community conflict and grassroots campaigns; corporate relations failures; reputational threats; employee relationship building; ethics/integrity/compliance; litigation visibility; Web-based attacks; and threats to corporate survival. His broad-based experience ranges from media-initiated investigations to product recalls and plant closings, from criminal litigation to takeovers. He is frequently retained by senior management to directly intervene and manage the resolution of corporate problems and bad news. The situations he helps resolve often involve conflict, controversy, community action, or activist opposition. Almost half of his practice involves civil and criminal litigation.

He is a teacher, thinker, coach, and trusted advisor with the unique ability to help executives look at problems from a variety of sensible, constructive, principled perspectives. He teaches clients how to take highly focused, ethically appropriate action. He has personally counseled, coached, and guided thousands of executives in organizations large and small from many cultures representing government; the military and defense industry; the agriculture, banking, computer, financial, food processing, health care, insurance, paper, real estate development, and telecommunications industries; cooperatives; trade and professional associations; and non-profit agencies. He is a coach to many CEOs.

Jim helps prepare spokespersons for crucial public appearances, local and network news interviews including 20-20, 60 Minutes, Dateline NBC, and Nightline, and for financial analyst meetings, and legislative and congressional testimony. He also provides personal coaching for executives in trouble, or facing career-defining problems and succession issues.
He is a prolific author (six books, hundreds of articles and monographs), lecturer (corporate, college and university), trainer, counselor, and public speaker. He is an editorial board member of most of Public Relation’s important Journals and serial Publications. His book, “Why Should the Boss Listen to You?” was published by Jossey-Bass in 2008.

His newest book, “Lukaszewski on Crisis Communication, What Your CEO Needs to Know about Reputation Risk and Crisis Management,” was published March 11, 2013. It was named one of the 30 Best Business Books of 2013 by Soundview Executive Book Summaries. It is available now on Amazon.com.

An accredited member of the (IABC) International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the (PRSA) Public Relations Society of America (APR), Mr. Lukaszewski is also a member of the PRSA’s College of Fellows (Fellow PRSA); Board of Ethics & Professional Standards; a member of ASIS International, where he serves on the Crisis Management and Business Continuity Council. He has lectured annually at the U.S. Marine Corp’s East Coast Commander’s Media Training Symposium from 1987 to 2009.

Lukaszewski received his BA in 1974 from Metropolitan State University in Minnesota. He is a former deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Economic Development and assistant press secretary to former Minnesota Governor Wendell Anderson. He founded Minnesota-based Media Information Systems Corporation in 1978. Prior to founding The New York based Lukaszewski Group Inc. in 1989 he was senior vice president and director of Executive Communication Programs for Georgeson & Company and a partner with Chester Burger Company, both in New York City. In 2011 He joined St. Paul Minnesota based Risdall Public Relations as president of its Lukaszewski Group Division. Risdall is ranked as the third largest PR firm in Minnesota and 182 out of the top 250 U.S. local firms ranked by the Holmes report.

His biography is listed in 30 editions of various Marquis Who’s Who in America (including the 2014, 68th edition), The World (including 2014, 31st edition), Finance and Government. The story of his career appears in, “Living Legends of American Public Relations,” (2008) Grand Valley State University. His name was listed in Corporate Legal Times as one of “28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose,” and in PR Week as one of 22 “crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis.” In 2013 and 2014, he was named one of the “Top 100 Thought Leaders in Trustworthy Business Behavior” by Trust Across America. Googling James E. Lukaszewski yields more than 51,000 entries.

James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
President, The Lukaszewski Group Division, Risdall Public Relations
550 Main Street, Suite 100, New Brighton, MN 55112
Jim's Office: 651-286-6788 (with voice mail)
Cell: 203-948-7029 (24/7 with e-mail, voice mail and texting)
E-mail: jel@e911.com
Lukaszewski on Crisis Communication: What Your CEO Needs to Know About Reputation Risk and Crisis Management

“Jim is one of the most knowledgable people on earth about crisis management.”
Jay Rayburn, PhD, APR, CPRC, Fellow PRSA, Division Director, School of Communication, Florida State University

“Lukaszewski’s book should be compulsory reading for leaders, aspiring leaders and students of the business game.”
Steve Harrison, Non-Executive Chairman, Lee Hecht Harrison

“Your Ceo’s in HandCuffs! Things are GoinG DownHiLL, Fast! Your WhoLe worLD is watCHinG to see wHat You Do neXt. Time matters. Your reputation and your job are on the line. It’s a career-defining moment – your destiny is in your hands. Fail to manage it, and someone else – the victims − will!”

In this industry-defining book on crisis management and leadership recovery, Jim Lukaszewski jump-starts the discussion by clearly differentiating a crisis from other business interruption events and introduces a concept rarely dealt with in crisis communication and operational response planning: managing the victim dimension of crisis.

Delivered in his straight-talking style backed with compelling case studies, Lukaszewski On Crisis Communication is your guide to preparing for a crisis and the explosive visibility that comes with it. In 10 chapters of field-tested how-to’s and to-do’s Lukaszewski teaches you:

• How crises create victims;
• To avoid the toxicity of silence;
• To overcome the abusive, intrusive and coercive behavior of bloviators, bellyachers, back-bench bitchers, the media, activists and critics;
• To drive attorneys to settle instead of litigate;
• Apology is the atomic energy of empathy;
• Simple, sensible, sincere, constructive, positive techniques to reduce contention and to succeed!

“Lukaszewski on Crisis Communication” is now available at amazon.com
As well as Jim’s previous best-seller, “Why Should the Boss Listen to You?”

James E. Lukaszewski
(Loo-ka-SHEV-skee), ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, named among the 100 Top Thought Leaders of 2013 by Trust Across America; is profiled in Living Legends of American Public Relations; listed in Corporate Legal Times as one of “28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose,” and cited in PR Week as one of 22 “crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis.”

He is President of the Lukaszewski Group Division of Risdall Public Relations.

Rothstein Associates Inc.
Brookfield, Connecticut USA
www.rothstein.com

"When I’m asked what business professionals or students should read in the area of crisis communication, I always say, ‘Buy anything by Jim Lukaszewski.’”

Jonathan Bernstein, President, Bernstien Crisis Management

“Jim is one of the most knowledgable people on earth about crisis management.”

Lyndon Bird, FBCI, Technical Director, The Business Community Institute

“A must-read for anyone who might be called upon to respond to a crisis in one day.”

Jay Rayburn, PhD, APR, CPRC, Fellow PRSA, Division Director, School of Communication, Florida State University
A Book for Everyone Who Wants to Help Their Boss Know What to Do

Do people hold up meetings waiting for you?
Do people remember what you say and quote you to others?
Do others seek out your opinion and ideas?
Do they try to influence you to influence your boss?

“Far more than it first appears. This book is a real look at the soul of what good business can be. Everything could be like this, health care, politics, etc. Jim Lukaszewski sketches the boss, inner circle, advisor, and staff. He then explains each player and how they fit together, where they are coming from, and how you contribute. The big picture is there when you finish. He has some good visuals and many lists:

7 disciplines
5 imperatives
4 things to do
5 flawed strategies
9 things a leader expects
11 things you need to know to work with a boss
3 lists of questions to consider, nice learning device

Too many books could be a pamphlet, not this one. ‘Managers test before they trust,’ a nice thought. I liked the section on trust. On half the pages I wrote a comment. An enjoyable read of deep material. His thoughts reveal a life that works. This body of work is a protein meal. I Love this book.”
— Dr. Don Malnati, Five Star Reviewer on Amazon.com,
January 2, 2009

“Leaders must have trusted advisors. This book shows you how to be one and stay one.”
— Harvey B. Mackay, author of the New York Times #1 bestseller Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive

“Jim Lukaszewski has personally helped resolve more corporate crises than anyone I know of. His experience ‘in the trenches’ equals the high quality of his judgment.”
— Chester Burger, APR, Fellow PRSA, American Public Relations Leader Emeritus and PRSA Gold Anvil Winner

James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) is an expert in managing and reducing contention, counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications issues. He is a prolific author (six books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), trainer, counselor, and internationally recognized speaker.

Visit Jim’s Web Site:
www.e911.com
Register for Jim’s Free eNewsletter:
www.e911.com
Visit Jim’s Blog:
http://crisisgurublog.e911.com
E-mail Jim:
jel@e911.com

Available wherever books are sold.