



Crisis and Credibility Communication

A brief overview

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Objectives

- Introduce principles of Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication
- Provide concepts useful in reputational risk communication
- Consider ways to engage in high-stakes communication when stakeholders are angry

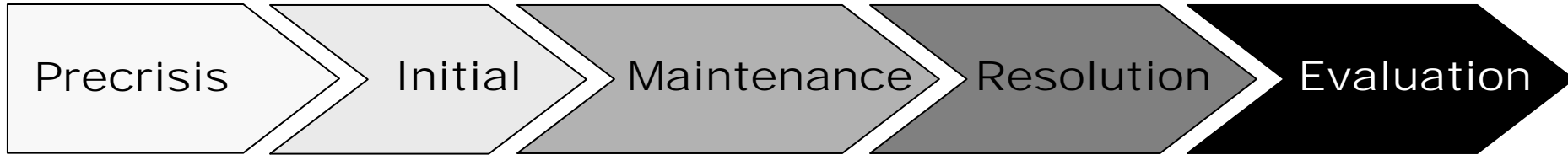
Agenda

- Part 1—CERC (30 minutes)
- Part 2—Reputational Risk (20 minutes)
- Part 3—Delivering bad news (20 minutes)
- Lecture Q/A (15 minutes)
- Scenario (15 minutes)
- Scenario discussion and follow-up Q/As (20 minutes)

Part 1: Lecture

Crisis and Emergency-Risk Communication (CERC)

Crisis Communication Lifecycle



- Prepare
- Foster alliances
- Develop consensus recommendations
- Test message
- Evaluate plans

- Express empathy
- Provide simple risk explanations
- Establish credibility
- Recommend actions
- Commit to stakeholders

- Further explain risk by population groups
- Provide more background
- Gain support for response
- Empower risk/benefit decisionmaking
- Capture feedback for analysis

- Educate a primed public for future crises
- Examine problems
- Gain support for policy and resources
- Promote your organization's role

- Capture lessons learned
- Develop an event SWOT
- Improve plan
- Return to precrisis planning

Communication assumptions

- Job to prevent illness or death, restore or maintain calm, engender confidence in response
- Emergencies are chaotic so roles should be simplified
- Confusion is reduced with fast, relevant, simple and consistent messages
- Communication resources will be limited

5 communication failures that kill operational success

1. Mixed messages from multiple experts
2. Information released late
3. Paternalistic attitudes
4. Not countering rumors in real-time
5. Public power struggles and confusion

What we know

- The more the public knows about our efforts to openly share information, the more they trust us
- Messages are judged based on trustworthiness

Differences that matter

- Role of culture
 - All individuals like no other (individual)
 - All individuals like some others (culture)
 - All individuals like all others (homo sapiens)
- Cultural beliefs held more strongly during crisis

Six Principles of CERC

- **Be First:** If the information is yours to provide by organizational authority—do so as soon as possible. If you can't—then explain how you are working to get it.
- **Be Right:** Give facts in increments. Tell people what you know when you know it, tell them what you don't know, and tell them *if* you will know relevant information later.
- **Be Credible:** Tell the truth. Do not withhold to avoid embarrassment or the possible “panic” that seldom happens. Uncertainty is worse than not knowing—rumors are more damaging than hard truths.

Six Principles of CERC

- **Express Empathy:** Acknowledge in words what people are feeling—it builds trust.
- **Promote Action:** Give people things to do. It calms anxiety and helps restore order.
- **Show Respect:** Treat people the way you want to be treated—the way you want your loved ones treated—always—even when hard decisions must be communicated.

The STARCC Principle

Your public messages in a crisis must be:

Simple

Timely

Accurate

Relevant

Credible

Consistent

Part 2 Lecture: Reputational Risk Management

Making You *RiskSmart*TM

“It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.”

– Warren Buffett

Credibility = Our Behavior + Our Communication



Reputation -- is the perception--good, bad, or indifferent--held by interested persons or groups about the agency's characteristics, achievements, and behaviors.

Why do we protect our credibility?

What is at stake?

Why CDC protects its credibility:

- CDC must have the public's trust to do its mission, or **we** risk:
 - increased disease, injury and death;
 - demands for the misallocation of limited resources; and
 - circumvented public health policies

3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats



3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats

Ignore Enterprise Wide Systems

- Governance
- Operational
- Compliance
- External

Ignore brand enhancement activities



3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats

Overcome

- Policies
- Planning
- Early detection
- Leader support
- Employee support



3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats



Mitigation

- Continue offensive behavior
- Refuse to acknowledge wrong doing
- Ignore restitution
- Attempt to conceal
- Faulty assessment of credibility

3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats



Overcome

- Detect early
- Stop behavior
- Make it better
- Apologize

3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats



- Deny
- Shoot the Messenger
- Compartmentalize
- Respond with Silence
- Respond with evasion and half-truths
- Respond with selected information
- Point fingers

3 Behavioral Risk Points: Overcome Threats



Overcome:

- Accurate assessment
- Speed
- Openness
- Take responsibility

Risk is Risky

- Risk is in the eye of the beholder
- Probability of harm \times Impact of harm = Risk
- Differing assumptions
- Selective omission, inclusion = bias
- Unknown latent effects

The consequences of an event

- Best if crises never occur . . .
- An organization can be forgiven when something goes wrong.
- They won't be if they are perceived as not caring that things have gone wrong.

The event happens . . .

- Early and empathetic action may mitigate damage.
- Most organizations are not structured nor are their leaders committed to quick, caring action and they fail before they begin.

Event response planning

- Have response action team in place
- Monitor reactions of stakeholders
- Correct misperceptions early
- Meet with stakeholders

5 Key Elements To Build Trust

1. Expressed empathy
2. Competence
3. Honesty
4. Commitment
5. Accountability

Asking for forgiveness

- Stop doing what caused harm
- Apologize
- Take steps to avoid it from happening
- Make it better (fix things)
- Communicate all of these to those who care

Why we don't do these

- Denial
- Emotional conflict
- Worry about liability
- Apologizing feels like failure

Communication Principles:

- We embrace intellectual honesty and transparency in the release of information to fully empower public decision making.
- We do not use trickery or deceptive communication techniques to advance our mission or our reputation.
- We are accountable for our actions, good or bad, and recommendations, popular or not.

Communication Principles cont.

- Our good reputation is not sacrificed for the sake of any past, current, or future employee or partner.
- We admit mistakes, past and present, and take responsibility for correcting them.
- We do not withhold information only to avoid embarrassment.



Part 3

Deliver tough news & preserve relationships

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Who we are—what we do

- At the very core of public health are fundamental human concerns, fears and hopes
- The purpose of public health is to efficiently and effectively prevent or reduce illness, injury, and death across the lifespan
- You must have the public's trust to do the mission

Trust and Mistrust

- People judge the response to an issue or crisis based on trust
- Trust is the natural consequence of promises fulfilled
- Mistrust is an outgrowth of the perception that promises were broken and values violated
- You fulfill trust by combining your best science with strong ethics and values

If Trust is not Preserved

- Relationships damaged
- Demands for misallocation of resources
- Public health goals are circumvented
- Fiscal resources are inequitably applied

We can't accomplish our mission

5 Communication Mistakes

- Inadequate access
- Lack of clarity
- No energy for response
- Too little, too late
- Perception of arrogance

Bad news! What next?

- Don't "sit" on bad news
- Balance your emotions
- Role model dignified behavior
- Represent your organization, not you
- Don't offer false hope

Dealing With Angry People

Anger arises when people. . .

- Have been hurt
- Feel threatened by events out of their control
- Are not respected
- Have their fundamental beliefs challenged

4 parts of bad news message

- A buffer statement (recognition of positive)
- Reasons for action/decision
- Bad news delivered without ambiguity with empathy
- Positive close

The discussion that follows

- Expect to repeat the message over again
- Continue to express empathy
- Don't promise what you can't deliver yourself
- Understand people "shoot" the messenger
- Really listen

Partner Communication Strategies

- Treat grantees/partners intelligently
- Express empathy
- Confront uncertainty. Be prepared to say "I don't know."
- Explain the decision-making process (note core values)
- Prepare—planning tools

Questions?

To use microphone, hold
down “ctrl” key while talking

You may also ask in chat
area