



## CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

Getting your message over strongly and clearly in speeches, presentations, writing and media interviews

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### INTRODUCTION

Tiger Woods had an affair. And caused the public relations fiasco of the last couple of years.

Michael McCain's company sold a product that killed 22 people. Yet he's hailed as a hero of crisis communications.

What can we learn from the cases of Tiger Woods and Maple Leaf Foods? And from other communications disasters? Let's face it, there have been a lot of them.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown agreed to wear a microphone for a TV company. That was during the British election campaign. While campaigning, he met some people - including a woman who gave him a hard time. He got back in his car and drove to his next meeting. But he forgot he was still wearing the microphone.

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In the car he ranted to his assistant about having to meet the woman. He called her a bigot. It was all picked up by the TV crew. It was broadcast.

Gordon Brown had to apologize. He's now the former British Prime Minister.

Now we have the new darling of the Tea Party Movement in trouble. Christine O'Donnell is the Republican Senate Candidate for Delaware. She said she was educated at Oxford University in England

It's a lie.

She's gone to ground. She's not talking to the media.

William Hague said too much to the media. He is the British Foreign Secretary. There were rumours about his sexual orientation.

So he issued a long statement. It talks about intimate details of his marriage. Problems of infertility. His wife's multiple miscarriages. Rumours the marriage was in trouble.

And it says there was nothing wrong with him sharing a hotel room with his parliamentary assistant Christopher. Not once - but several times.

And then there was Tony Hayward, the boss of British Petroleum. As the Gulf oil spill unfolded, his life changed because of one sentence he said to reporters. He said: "I just want my life back"

His life now involves commuting to an office in Russia.

You could probably name a whole lot more examples, examples closer to home. Just this week Howard Epstein, a member of the Nova Scotia Legislative Assembly, said too much to a reporter over the cost of a new convention centre. Now he's accused to breaching cabinet confidentiality.

And Halifax mayor Peter Kelly didn't do very well explaining why he had a nine millimeter bullet in his bag at an airport security check. "I forgot," he said.

You'd think all these people were media savvy. They have communications advisors. They've had media training.

Yet - mouths opens - and feet go firmly inside.

This White Paper will give you some really practical tips. Tips about dealing with the media. Tips about crisis communications.

But I want to go further. This White Paper is called critical communications. Most of what you do - in public - involves critical communications.

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We're not just talking about scandals and headlines.

- We're talking about the tone of emails you send.
- We're talking about the language you use in proposals and promotional material.
- We're talking about the way you speak in public.

When you speak in public, or send an email or letter or proposal, or do a radio or television interview, you are branding yourself.

Often we spend a lot of money on branding. We invest in logos and web sites and kit folders and colours and fonts... and on and on. We want to establish our brand as credible - reliable - trustworthy. We want people to know we are good to do business with.

The graphics and artwork are wonderful.

But you know - we are our brand.

We put our brand on display every time we meet someone, shake hands, say Hello; every time we make a presentation, or leave a voice mail, or write a newsletter, or send an email.

So these tips will help you project yourself - and therefore your brand - clearly and confidently every day of the year.

## **SPEECHES AND PRESENTATIONS**

In a Newspan survey, 23% of people said they'd rather die than speak in public. And actor, producer and speaker George Jessel had a good line: he said "Our brains start working the moment we are born - and don't stop until we stand up to speak in public."

At Podium Media & Communications Coaching we developed a technique called TalkitOut™.

It makes nervous speakers good. And it makes good speakers great.

Let's look at the key points of Talkitout.

First, our Communications Mantra.

- Have something to say
- Believe in it
- Say it simply
- Shut up

Let's look at those elements.

## **Have something to say**

This is harder than it sounds. Think of some speeches and presentations you've listened to. They are like a journey into the unknown. You have no idea what the speaker wants you to take away from the session.

And sometimes there's some evidence that the speaker doesn't know what the destination is, either

Having something to say means focusing your ideas. Really focusing. Think about your own businesses or organizations. Can you express what you are all about in ten seconds?

That's 30 words. That's the length of a soundbite on TV. Actually it's a bit long for a soundbite these days. Think of it as your elevator pitch.

## **Believe in it**

You have to believe in what you are selling - whether it's a product or a philosophy.

Your passion is your strongest tool as a speaker. But it involves figuring out a few other things - like knowing your core values. We'll come back to that later

It involves knowing your audience - and figuring out what YOU want THEM to do differently because of your presentation.

## **Say it simply**

Simple, everyday words are vital if you want to be a powerful speaker.

Later we'll look at what I call message inflation: the more important the message the more we try to dress it up in fancy language.

## **Shut up**

An awful lot of problems in speeches and interviews happen because we forget to shut up. We're nice people, we like to offer a little more, so we elaborate - and in that elaboration lies disaster.

TalkitOut™ - try a different way of preparing your speeches and presentations.

A lot of people - most people in my experience - prepare a speech like this:

- They sit in silence at a keyboard
- Think of words

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- Brain sends message to fingers
- Fingers tap keys
- Words appear on screen
- Eyes evaluate words on screen, and send message back to brain
- Brain processes data and sends message to fingers to change words or move on.

What's missing?

Two vital absolutely organs are missing. The mouth and the ears.

You're not supposed to be writing to your audience. You are supposed to be speaking to them. But if you prepare like this - in silence - thinking great thoughts quietly - your speeches will almost always suffer. You'll be reading at the audience.

You see, we all use two vocabularies.

There's the one we use in conversation:

- Simple words
- Short sentences
- Sometimes not even sentences
- Just fragments
- Very direct
- And the words slide easily off the tongue

And then there's the vocabulary we use when we are writing:

- Bigger words
- More syllables
- More complex sentences
- More subordinate clauses

Sometimes we plays tricks with our sentences - like inverting them. (Example: Originally from England, Neil Everton has called Nova Scotia home for 16 years). In print, the inverted sentence is common - and works well. But we never use it in conversation. Listen to speeches and I guarantee you'll hear it, from people who don't speak before they write.

TalkitOut™ is about talking the words on to the page. Speaking them out loud (really speaking them, not just thinking them) before you write them out.

When you speak out a word, phrase or sentence you are testing its usability.

Try it. See how easily it slides off the tongue. Change it if necessary.

Then - and only then - write it.

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So first big tip is this: if you are preparing a speech or presentation -  
get in the habit of talking it out.

Say the words - try the words - before you write them down.

The second big tip is this:

set the words out differently on the page.

Let me show you what I mean.

If I was preparing a speech about Talkitout using the conventional way of setting out the script, it might look like this:

TalkitOut™ is about talking the words on to the page. Speaking them out loud (really speaking them, not just thinking them) before you write them out. When you speak out a word, phrase or sentence you are testing its usability. Try it. See how easily it slides off the tongue. Change it if necessary. Then - and only then - write it.

Using the Talkitout™ Technique, I would set out the speech very differently:

TalkitOut™ is about **talking** the words on to the page.

Speaking them **out loud**

(really **speaking** them,

not just **thinking** them).

**Saying them**

**before**

**writing them.**

When you speak out a word, phrase or sentence

you are testing its usability.

Try it.

See how **easily** it slides off the tongue.

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Change it if necessary.

**Then -**

and only then -

**write it.**

The first, conventional, version looks like a page from a book. It's really hard to lift those words off that page with feeling - because you are reading. And if the sentences are long you are trying to figure out where you get to breathe.

The second version, using TalkitOut™, is so much easier to read.

So much easier to see where to put emphasis. You can put key words and phrases in bold to help get the meaning over clearly and strongly. It's so much easier to perform.

And did you notice that I changed the words slightly between the two versions. The phrase

Speaking them out loud (really speaking them, not just thinking them) before you write them out doesn't flow off the tongue. The thought in parentheses gets in the way. It may work on paper, but it feels clunky when I try to speak it. So it has to be changed.

So if you make speeches or presentations, try setting out the words differently.

Let's look at some of the benefits of the TalkitOut™ Technique:

- Authenticity
- Built-in rehearsal
- Confidence
- Logical flow
- Easy comprehension

One other tip is this: have a sound structure for planning your presentation. This is one I like:

- Hook
- Context
- Content
- Conclusion

Before you can start structuring your speech or presentation, you need to define your controlling idea, or focus.

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Narrow it down to one sentence. It's the big idea you want the audience to take away from your presentation.

To figure out your focus, you have to be absolutely clear about the core of your message. If you were writing a movie you'd call it the controlling idea. In Rocky, or Indiana Jones, it's 'perseverance and ingenuity help the underdog triumph'; in Finding Nemo it's 'love helps you learn to trust'.

The controlling idea is the one sentence that controls a 2 hour film. You need a controlling idea for your speech or presentation.

If you are wondering if I have a controlling idea for this, I do. It's this: 'authenticity is the key to all effective communications.'

From the focus, move to the hook.

### Hook

The first few sentences are critical. You want the audience to lean forward, to engage. They're wondering what's in it for them. They're wondering if they should have stayed home and cleaned the car

So I'd advise against opening lines saying how pleased you are to be there. Or starting by saying 'in this presentation I will tell you this, this and this'.

Hook them. Grab them. Get them to lean forward.

### Context

After a strong hook, move to the context. Context may be information people need in order to follow your arguments. Without a little bit of background your presentation may not make sense. (But don't get carried away and start offering a history lesson. A little context is vital, too much can be boring).

### Content

Now you can unfold your arguments. This will probably be the longest part of your script.

### Conclusion

Finally, wrap it all up elegantly and dance off the stage.

## **Three Languages of Communication**

We don't just speak with our words. We speak with our bodies and with with what we call Inner Language. That's your energy and your enthusiasm.

### **Communication Impact**

- Body language - 55%
- Sound/tone - 38 %
- Words - 7%

In other words, 93% of your impact on an audience can be non-verbal. Make sure your body language supports your spoken message. And make sure the audience can feel your passion and enthusiasm for the topic. Energy is contagious.

You can't expect people to be engaged unless you are engaged. You can't persuade people to be excited unless you are excited.

You may be nervous. You may be tense. You may be having a bad day for all sorts of reasons. But when it comes to the speech or presentation, you have to be pumped. Your enthusiasm is your audience's greatest turn-on.

Let's go back to spoken language. Here's an example of a presentation one of our clients prepared (BEFORE she learned how to TalkitOut™).

It was the goal of the MPA group to initiative a radical and innovative shift in the way information and knowledge are created and leveraged by the members.

Steer clear of jargon. It's confusing and alienating to anyone who doesn't speak the same code. And it's not the way we talk to people we care about.

We have a foolproof tool for making sure you don't use jargon and bafflegab. The tool is just two words:

Hi Mom.

Put Hi Mom in front of anything you propose to say. If the words still sound like you talking to a friend, great. But if it sounds strange, you know you have to simplify and be more conversational. I mean, could you keep a straight face when you say:

Hi Mom. It was the goal of the MPA group to initiative a radical and innovative shift in the way information and knowledge are created and leveraged by the members.

What the client was talking about was developing an effective way of exchanging information within an organization. When she learned to TalkitOut™ she created a much more engaging and persuasive speech. She simplified the language, threw out the jargon, and built the presentation round a metaphor of a street market.

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Remember, speeches and presentations are about changing people's behaviour and attitudes. To do that, the audience has to buy in. To buy in, they have to engage with you.

By making simple changes to her language and style, and telling a story rather than simply dumping data, she greatly increased the chance of getting buy-in.

### **Tell stories**

Facts tell, but stories sell.

Information on its own is forgettable. Stories make information memorable and manageable. We learn through stories. We share our family history through stories.

Stories are a vital tool in communication. Make sure you tell plenty of stories.

They have to be relevant. And they work well if they are short. They really are effective at getting people to engage with you and remember your message.

### **WRITING**

Problems with writing can really backfire on you. This was part of a glossy newsletter sent by the manager of an up-market hotel to all guests:

We have scheduled training modules to improve our Associates ability to heighten our overall guest experience and mechanisms to solicit Guest feedback on ways in which we can meaningfully improve.

What does the language say about the author? Dull? Pompous? Pleased with himself? A bit of a stuffed-shirt.

Branding is about managing perception. Change the language and you change the impression of the hotel and the hotel manager.

We're doing everything we can think of to make your stay as enjoyable as possible. Please tell us if we've forgotten anything.

This is what I call the Inflationary Trap: the more important message, the more we are tempted to dress it up. But the opposite is true. The more important the message, the more we need to keep the language simple.

The stakes were pretty high for Winston Churchill in 1941. He had to rally a nation to win a war:

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We shall not fail or falter. We shall not weaken or tire. Give us the tools and we will finish the job.

He still used simple language. Churchill used to say that small words are best, and old words are best of all.

Writing puts your credibility on show. Here's an example, from the website of a well known author and speaker:

One of the top leadership guru's in the world

Wouldn't you think a guru - especially a top guru - would know the difference between plural and possessive?

If words cause a raised eyebrow, they may be harming your brand. Proof read copy really carefully. Here's another tip:

Print before proofing.

I don't know why, but you find far more mistakes on paper than you do on a screen.

Probably the best writing tip I know is this:

put your scripts on a diet.

Imagine your had to pay for your words. Would you pay a dollar for every word you write?

The quickest, surest way to make writing more muscular is to strip out all the clutter. Start with the word 'that'. You can almost always leave it out. Then strip out adjectives and adverbs. Use stronger nouns and verbs. Strip out every word that isn't doing any heavy lifting. You'll probably be able to take out 15 per cent of the words.

## **EMAIL**

We're all slaves to email now. But some people are victims of emails. At workshops we hear a lot of references to bosses or colleagues being rude, snarky, inappropriate - even humiliating - in public emails.

Here are the top two complaints:

1 - Correcting an email in a group response - in a way that embarrasses the sender.

Tip - think twice, and then think a third time, before hitting 'reply all'.

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### 2 - Emails that have a disrespectful tone

Tip - remember Communication Impact: 93 per cent of your impact on another person is non verbal. But e-mail has no body language. The reader cannot see your face or hear your tone of voice so chose your words carefully and thoughtfully.

Put yourself in the other person's place and think how your words may come across.

Here are a few more email horrors you should avoid:

- Forgetting the subject line

It makes no sense to send a message that reads "no subject". We all get so much email these days. If you want your message to be read, take the time to put in a relevant and interesting subject line. The subject line is the hook.

- Not personalizing the message

OK, email is informal. But we should still start with some form of salutation. Without that courtesy, you can be perceived as rude and cold.

- Errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation

A badly spelled email is a really quick way of ruining your reputation. Not so long ago I received an email from an advertising agency, promoting a big new campaign:

We thought a rehearsal for regional advertsing executives would be a great opportunity for us to prepare.

That rehearsal is a great opportunity for them to check the spelling of advertising executives. Letting mistakes like those slip through raise questions about how careful you are, your attention to detail, about whether you rush into print without checking.

## **BUSINESS PROPOSALS**

When it comes to the world of business, no communication is as critical as a proposal to a prospective client.

Here are five tips for making sure you have a dynamite proposal, in a logical structure

- 1 - Show you understand the client's problems.

The lead paragraph should be a quick, clear statement of the customer's needs.

- 2 - Set out the solutions.

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Explain how you will fix the problems. Keep it simple and straightforward. No false modesty, but no promises you can't deliver.

### 3 - Identify Benefits

As a result of your solutions, the customer will benefit by ....

Set out clearly the deliverables.

### 4 - Demonstrate Credibility

This can be a make or break section. What makes you so good? Who have you worked for? What have you done? What testimonials do you have? What awards have you collected?

### 5 - Provide Evidence

Do you have samples? Can you point to examples of your work elsewhere?

A crucial element of the business proposal is that it is clearly targeted at the intended audience.

A lot of times you will hear me say 'avoid jargon and go for simplicity'. This is one time I won't say that. If your audience is technical, they may have certain expectations of the language. Speak to them in that language.

Of course, if the audience is non-technical - stick with simple language.

## **NEWS RELEASES**

You have things to talk about - ideas to promote - events to publicize. You have all the tools of the social media world to draw on. But a really effective way of reaching a very large audience is still through the news media.

Getting a story in the newspapers, or on television, is still a great way of getting publicity. And it's free. Not only that. You pick up a little credibility by getting your stories in the media.

But it can be really tough getting the media to pay attention to you.

Here are a few tips from my perspective as a former journalist. I've worked in newspapers, radio and television. I've been a reporter, a producer and an executive.

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First, accept there may be a disconnect between what you want and what a newspaper or television station wants.

You want publicity - promotion.

A newsroom wants a news story. They do not want to give you free advertising. That's what commercials are for.

So you need to give them something that looks and sounds like a news story, or can be incorporated into a news story.

- Adopt a news style of writing.
- Simple, no hype, no jargon, informal.
- If you can build it round a person - so much the better.
- It has to be new and different.
- It helps if there's a conflict in there somewhere - simply in terms of an obstacle being overcome. Journalists thrive on people bumping up against obstacles.
- Make it relevant to a broad audience.
- Keep it short.

People in newsrooms are busy. So help them:

- Write a headline that makes you go wow
- Write a first sentence that gets to the heart of what's new and exciting
- Put a human face into it - with people and quotes
- Put it in context - why it matters
- Emphasize why it's such an achievement
- Make sure the contact details are all included
- Try to keep it all on one page.

A couple of other things to bear in mind:

Target your audience - and understand how they work. Broadcasters have their day planned by 9.30 in the morning. Get material on their agenda. Keep sending information. Never assume your material gets read.

If they have a lot of stories planned, or it's a busy news day, they may not be looking for more. On a quiet news day in the middle of summer they'll be grateful for your news release.

Don't rely on faxes and emails.

Lift up the phone. Make a call.

Here's my best tip on getting your story out in the media.

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Become a resource for them.

Offer yourself as an expert - as an analyst - as a commentator. Watch television any day and you'll see a parade of regular faces. Once you get on a newsroom's contact list as a good source of information and analysis - it's hard to get off.

But first - you need to get on.

### **MEDIA INTERVIEWS**

Let's start with some basic points:

- Have something to say. Focus your message. Strip it down to the essentials. Can you express it in 10 seconds (30 words) - the duration of a typical sound-bite?
- What is your target audience? (And it's not the reporter - always remember in any interview you are talking through the reporter to a much wider audience).
- What is your objective? Why are you doing the interview? What do you want to achieve?

Don't fixate on answering questions. Why would you be doing a media interview? To deliver a message...

So your priority is not answering questions that may not relate to your message. Your priority is finding space to deliver the message. So I want you to think of questions in a different way.

I want you to think of questions as springboards.

Every question gives you a chance to launch your message. And remember who you are talking to. You are talking to your target audience. That might be a nation, a province, a community. It might be decision makers. It might be your supporters - or even your opponents. Knowing your audience is your first step to developing a strong message.

When you are drafting possible message lines, keep the sentences really short.

- Use simple language
- Short sentences
- No jargon
- Simple language in short sentences makes it easier to remember key points, and easier to deliver.

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- Build it around people. Everything that happens happens to people. Every decision you take affects people. Yet sometimes we talk in the abstract.

Let's look at parts of a couple of messages on the same topic from just a few days ago:

This comprehensive, independent and impartial review of the entire investigation is the only way to determine the facts of what could have been done better.

RCMP reaction to public inquiry into serial killings

The families and loved ones of Pickton's victims deserve to know why it took so long to arrest him.

Vancouver Police Department reaction

What's the difference? Which works better? The RCMP response is formal, predictable and abstract. The Vancouver PD response says the same thing - but in a much more conversational and compelling way. And it's shorter.

### Good answers

What makes for a good answer?

- Focused
- Conversational
- Short (max 15 seconds)
- Positive
- Delivered at a comfortable pace (not rushed)

If you worry about being put on the spot by reporters' questions, take heart from this quote from Bill Fox, a press secretary to former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney:

'I never once lied to a reporter. But I more than once sought sanctuary in a badly-phrased question.'

You don't need to lie - or even duck or dodge. A lot of the questions will actually help you bridge to your message.

### Questions that help

- Closed (can be answered yes or no)
- Non-questions (statements)
- Double or buffet questions (several questions rolled into one)

Look how easy it is to bridge to a message from a closed question:

*Are you concerned where our food comes from?*

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*Answer*

*Everyone should be interested in where their food comes from. That's why we are...*

It's just as easy to bridge from a statement:

*A lot of people don't think about where their food comes from.*

*Answer*

*Knowing where your food comes from, and buying locally, is good for the consumer and good for the economy of the province.*

With multiple questions, respond to the question that supports your message:

*Why is this so important - and what's in it for the farmers?*

*Answer*

*This is vitally important because...*

### Questions to avoid

1 - Hypotheticals

Response

*Dealing in hypotheticals won't help - we need facts and the facts in this case are...*  
(bridging back to message).

2 - Personal questions

Response

*This is not about an individual - it's about providing decent services for people who need help...*

### Bridging

Sometimes you need help building bridges back to your message. Here are some phrases worth remembering:

- I need to put that in perspective
- The real question here is...
- We're hearing something very different. We're hearing...
- The context for this is...
- I'll get to that in a moment, but first we need to understand...
- That's interesting. Our experience has been...

More tips:

Listen carefully to the question - don't focus on rehearsing your answer.

Don't talk over the reporter. Sometimes great clips don't get used because the first few words of the answer are a jumble of voices.

### Don't be seduced by silence

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A lot of reporters will deliberately pause after you have answered - to see if you will add more. Resist the temptation to fill the silence with additional information. If you've delivered your message - smile and wait.

### Be wary of trigger words

Trigger words are emotion-laden words designed to provoke an intemperate response from an interviewee.

Different words may be triggers, depending on the context.

A question with a trigger word in it might be - Are you ashamed by your performance?

Another might be - How do you feel about this embarrassing failure?

Or - This fact-finding trip sounds more like a boondoggle.

Some reporters use them deliberately to provoke you. Others slip them in without even thinking. Don't react to triggers. And don't import the trigger word into your answer.

Use the words you want to use - not the words the reporter might want you to use.

If you get angry, or react, or rip off the microphone, or put your hand over the lens, or walk away from a camera - you lose. Your action becomes theatre - and television loves theatre.. A hand over the lens will get used more than any sound bite.

So far we've talked about critical communications. And how really every communication - from email to TV interview - can be critical to supporting or enhancing your brand - the credibility of yourself and your organization.

Let's wrap up by going to the place you don't want to go to.

## **CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS**

Why did Tiger Woods get it so wrong?

On Day One he tried to minimise what he sought to dismiss as a 'minor car accident'.

Next day he kept his head down while cops had to say they'd not been able to interview him, as they had planned.

The next day he posts a message on his web site. He admitted responsibility for the accident, and added some phrases 'I'm human and I'm not perfect', 'this is a private matter', 'unfounded rumours about my family'.

Fourth day - still has his head down - pulls out of tournament - cops say they've still not spoken to him.

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By the sixth day a girlfriend has gone public and Woods has put another message on his web site. He admits transgressions, and attacks the media for intrusion.

And so it kept building and building - and getting worse and worse for Woods.

Let's look at the fundamentals of crisis communications:

It's the three Rs

- Regret
- Responsibility
- Remedial action

and they have to come into play really quickly. Time is a real enemy. A quick response can really help - you can start to take charge of the crisis and manage the crisis - rather than simply responding to the crisis.

A personal appearance is vital. Statements on web sites make things worse.

And beating up on the media makes things worse, too. If you've benefited from media attention, maybe projected a squeaky clean image through the media, you have to expect media scrutiny. Ask Martha Stewart, or Hugh Grant, or Kobe Bryant, or the Catholic Church.

Let's end by looking at another real crisis - and how that was judged to have been well handled.

Listeria was discovered in some products prepared by Maple Leaf Foods in Canada. People started to die. By the time the outbreak was over, 22 were dead. And many others had been sick.

Michael McCain, the company's CEO, immediately went on TV. He said:

When listeria was discovered in the product, we launched immediate recalls to get it off the shelf, then we shut the plant down. Tragically our products have been linked to illnesses and loss of life. To Canadians who are ill and to the families who have lost loved ones, I offer my deepest sympathies. Words cannot begin to express our sadness for your pain . . .

But this week, our best efforts failed and we are deeply sorry. This is the toughest situation we have faced in 100 years as a company. We know this has shaken your confidence in us; I commit to you that our actions are guided by putting your interests first.

McCain's response has been praised by PR professionals. And it's been praised by academics to studied the way the crisis was handled.

Everyone is agreed that it was a triumph because of a number of factors.

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- The quick public statement of responsibility
- The quick action to limit the damage - plant shutdown, shelves cleared
- The public apology
- The fact there was no attempt to shift the blame

McCain was almost certainly under pressure to minimize liability.

You can imagine the conversations... we can't say this, we shouldn't say that. But McCain has said he was driven by two considerations

1 - to do the right thing

2 - to act in accordance with his core values

Maple Leaf Foods [core values](#) are posted on their web site. They include:

- Do what's right
- Transparency
- Humility

The website explains the Maple Leaf Foods communication strategy as:

"...having the self confidence and courage to be completely candid and direct; willing to communicate openly in a trusting manner; acting with passion, conviction and personal humility"

So before we sum up, the last thought I want to leave you with is this:

- what are your core values?
- have you're written them out?
- do you talk about them with your team?
- does everyone on the team understand and follow them?

Figuring out those core values will help when you are creating messages. And they'll really help when you have to decide between following your head or your heart.

Let's summarize crisis communications

- Respond quickly
- Fill the information void
- Provide known facts promptly
- Show human concern
- Gather background material
- Anticipate how events will unfold
- Plan for the worst
- If mistakes were made, acknowledge and talk about remedies
- Show leadership - be visible and available

CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

## USEFUL LINKS

[Presentation Skills](#)

[Media Skills](#)

[Writing](#)

[Podium Coaching blog](#)

## HOW TO CONTACT PODIUM MEDIA & COMMUNICATIONS COACHING

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