HOW TO DEVELOP THE MINDSET OF A STRATEGIST:
Getting to the Table Earlier & With More Personal Power

Participant Guide

A presentation sponsored by
Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Buffalo Niagara Chapter

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

Thursday, November 29, 2012
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. EST

Contents

- Participant Letter
- Handout
- Discussion Outline
- Why Should the Boss Listen to You? Book Abstract
- Lukaszewski on Crisis Communication Book Announcement – Coming Soon
- James E. Lukaszewski Biography
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PRSA Buffalo Niagara 2012 Annual Meeting

Featuring James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

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November 2012

Dear PRSA Seminar Participant:

Thank you for registering for the PRSA presentation: How to Develop the Mindset of a Strategist: Getting to the Table Earlier and With More Personal Power. During the brief time we’ll be together on November 29th, I’ll talk about the crucial, personal beliefs and actions that will enable you to become a more truly strategic thinker, and about how to add substantial value to your organization or clients through a more management-oriented approach. This program is designed to help you look at yourself, examine how you think, and learn how you can become a truly sought after strategic practitioner.

This program is about:

1. Building your influence
2. Acceptance of your counsel
3. Being sought after
4. Getting called earlier
5. Having more personal impact

Please review the enclosed materials. During the final 20 minutes of the program, time will be devoted to the specific questions and concerns of those participating in the seminar.

Should you wish to contact me ahead of time with the issues or questions you’d like me to address before the seminar, you may do so by e-mail directly to me.

jel@e911.com

If you would like to visit my Web site to get a flavor for the extensive knowledge and background brought to bear on today’s topic, please go to www.e911.com. Or visit my Crisis Guru Blog. Just go to my Web site, www.e911.com, and click on the Crisis Guru Blog link on the top right navigation menu bar.

While you are on my Web site, remember to sign up for my FREE eNewsletter, Executive Action: Strategic Management Insights for Leaders, Decision Makers, and Their Trusted Advisors. Just go to www.e911.com and enter your e-mail address at the bottom of the home page. Also check out the eNewsletter archive page for previous editions of Executive Action.

See you on November 29th. The time will be jam-packed with interesting, powerful, and useful information.

Sincerely,

James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
President
The Lukaszewski Group
HOW TO DEVELOP THE MINDSET OF A STRATEGIST:
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Handout

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How to Develop The Mindset of A Strategist: Getting to the Table Earlier and with More Personal Power

By James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

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

Today’s program will focus on:

• Defining Strategy
• The Seven Skills of the Strategist
• Building Your Influence
• Being Sought After
• Your Questions

My Philosophy

1. All problems are management problems before they are any other kind of problem.
2. All management problems are leadership challenges.
3. Leadership resides with those who can maintain more supporters than detractors.
4. Staff functions exist and are funded by leadership to help leaders do their jobs better.
5. Managers and leaders want to make the decisions… often based on the advice they receive from trusted strategic advisors.

My Assumptions

1. You are the table
2. You recognize what you need to do to be trusted
3. You are willing to change yourself to get there
4. YOYO
What Do They Want From You?

- Be candid.
- Help the boss with what to do next.
- Provide advice on the spot.
- Provide options.
- Say things that matter.
- Say things that the boss doesn’t know.
- Say things that the boss needs to know.

Understand Leadership Realities

- Leadership is mostly self-designated, self-taught, self-evaluated, and self-regenerated.
- Leadership is a fundamentally lonely activity. The bigger the organization the more isolated leadership can become.
- Freedom to act is limited.
- Success depends on everyone else.

Five Trends

- The average tenure of U.S. CEOs is decreasing (41 months or less).
- Huge compensation packages still allow CEOs to drop out, even with public uproar.
Five Trends (Continued)

- Non-business issues are imposing themselves, e.g., globalization, adverse legislation, anti-corporate activism.
- CEOs have yet to be measured on their morality or belief systems, but that’s coming.
- In both the U.S. and in Europe, career-defining risks for CEOs are increasing.

Broaden Your Perspective

- Notice trends.
- Study leaders.
- Study management information.
- Talk/write to time.
- Understand their needs.

Leaders Are Strategists
Managers Work Inside the Box

Strategy

A unique mixture of mental energy verbally injected into an organization through communication, which results in behavior that achieves organizational objectives.

Jack Welch on Strategy

The movement of a core idea or concept through changing circumstances.

Jacked Up: The Inside Story of How Jack Welch Talked GE into Becoming the World's Greatest Company

By Bill Lane
Strategy Is:

• Positive
• Energizing
• Purposeful
• About tomorrow
• How we get to the future

The rest is inside the box.

Understand the Differences Between:

• Leadership and management
• Staff and operations
• Strategy and stuff
• Optimism and pragmatism
• Management thinking styles
• Yesterday and tomorrow

Non-Strategy

• Create spin.
• Create stuff.
• Debate the past.
• Focus on the unimportant.
• Whine about lawyers or consultants.
Seven Skills of the Strategist

1. Verbalization
   - Outcome-Directed
   - Storytelling
     - Describe:
       - Destination
       - Route
       - Options
       - Costs
       - Pitfalls

2. Strategic Thinking
   - Use management language.
   - Provide truly strategic insight.
   - Talk, think, and recommend in a strategic context.
   - Focus on the ultimate outcome.
   - Go for the useful increments.
Questions About Being Strategic

• How do I get to the table?
• How do I stay at the table?
• How can I get better control of the boss?
• How can I have true influence over the boss?
• What do I do once I get to the table?

Understand Why Strategies Fail

• Not really part of strategic interest.
• Management can’t support them.
• Developed without input from the boss.
• Usurp legitimate territory of others.
• Avoid dealing with truly tough stuff.
• Media are rarely the first concern of management.

Management Thinking

Problem

I
II
III
IV
V

Solution, Answer, Ideas

Time

Intuitive Thinking

The MIND OF THE STRATEGIST

Seven Skills of the Strategist

3. Pragmatism

- The truly achievable
- A sense of reality
- What will work
- Incrementalism
- Simple, sensible, constructive, positive
4. Inconsistency

- Always seeks alternatives
- Believes in laggiership and entropy
- Intentionally different views/analyses
- Questions all assumptions
- Simplifies

5. Constructive Approaches

- Goal-focused
- Long-term
- Process-driven
- Strategically relevant
- Incrementally achieved
- Time sensitive

Make Recommendations in an Operational Context

Step 1: Situation Description: Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation. (60 words)

Step 2: Analysis/Explanation/Interpretation: Briefly describe what the situation means, its implications, and how it threatens or presents opportunities for your organization. (60 words)
Make Recommendations in an Operational Context (Continued)

Step 3: The Goal: Where are we headed? What’s our destination? What’s the end-point? How far do we have to go? (60 words)

Step 4: Options: Develop at least three response options for the situation you’re presented. You can suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from. Make sure that one of the options is “doing nothing.” (150 words)

Make Recommendations in an Operational Context (Continued)

Step 5: Recommendations: This is what you would do if you were in the boss’ shoes, and why. (60 words)

Step 6: Justification: Identify the negative or positive unintended consequences, events, and problems that could arise due to the options you have suggested or by doing nothing. (60 words)

Strategic Tools

- Action/readiness templates
- Checklists
- Exposure management & surveillance
- Issue forecasting
- Message maps
- Mind maps
- Option sequences
- Prioritized action steps
- Timelines
6. Pattern Intuition

- All incidents and circumstances have prior history and patterns.
- Draw existing information together to extract new insights.
- Find a solution by working against the patterns.
- Forecast based on pattern knowledge.

7. Management Sensitivity

- Aspects of the business will fail or not progress without it.
- Helps the boss achieve his or her objectives and goals.
- Helps the organization achieve its goals.
- Is truly necessary.
- Keeps money.
- Makes money.
- Saves money.

Know What Management Wants

- Advance warning, plus options for solving, or at least managing trouble or opportunity, and the unintended consequences both often bring.
- Someone who can forecast patterns of events and problems.
- Something beyond what the boss already knows.
- Well-timed, truly significant insights.
Key Insights

- Tomorrow vs. Yesterday
- Speak in management language
- Challenge every assumption
- Use tools
- Tell stories
- Seek out patterns
- Talk to time

See You at the Table

Check out Jim's Crisis Guru Blog

www.e911.com

Your first stop when crises occur.

Sign up for the free E-Newsletter
How to Develop The Mindset of A Strategist: Getting to the Table Earlier and with More Personal Power

By James E. Lukaszewski,
ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA
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.
For an organization to succeed, each day, at least 51 percent of those who matter have to be pulling in the same direction. That requires leadership from the top, every day, to show the way and to help forecast and overcome the new barriers that arise and the old barriers that persist. This is a tall order in many organizations.

Some leaders are good communicators, some are non-communicators. Some leaders are good delegators, some are autocrats. Some leaders are bureaucrats, some are activists, and some are charismatic. The reality is that organizations will be successful in the context of their current leaders and leadership.

The lesson for every leader is that success is more likely when simple, sensible, constructive efforts are undertaken to build and maintain a base within the most important audience most leaders have, their employees and others whose lives are directly affected by their organizational relationship.

The question is, of course, how can management accomplish its goals while allowing undisciplined, often chaotic communication strategies? Answer: With great difficulty, if at all.

A business organization is very similar to a political body, so we begin with a political strategy—to win in any environment, those seeking to advance, lead, or achieve must have a base of winning-minded collaborators and followers to get the job done and establish the momentum to tackle the next challenge. The political exercise is one of simplification rather than complexity. Effective communication is an exercise in process-driven execution.

We begin the process of base building using the Ridgeway Audience Issue Analysis* model. Communication success is dependent almost solely on the base audience’s level of interest in participating, or not, in a given situation. Figure One is the fundamental tool for carrying out this analysis. Here is the key: an issue generally has two types of audiences—the Base Audience and Special Publics. The Base Audience consists of those who have an ongoing, voluntary or involuntary interest or connection to the issue or circumstance. Usually the connection is a paycheck, some overwhelming benefit, or a threat that needs to be constrained.

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* The Ridgeway Strategic Audience Analysis Worksheet/Model is named for Paul Ridgeway, Chairman of Ridgeway International, a global special events firm based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The diagram was originally sketched on the back of a napkin in a fast food restaurant, in the middle of the night, in Canton, North Carolina. We were preparing to work with a huge paper mill as it encountered a serious community relations and political problem.
The second audience component is the Special Publics grouping. Special Publics are individuals, organizations, or entities that have a relationship with the sponsoring organization based on the individual agendas of each Special Public, sometimes in opposition to the agenda, issues, or questions of the Base Audience. In this template, the small circles on the left represent a wide variety of organizational types and groups that are connected to the issue or organization by their private agendas.

In the Base Audience section, you see, by the construction of the model, that the ideas and concepts to drive the issue or the organization forward begin in the center with Leaders. Communication moves out systematically to Top Management, then to Upper Management, then to Middle Management, then to First-line Supervisors, then to Employees, then to Employee Families, and then to the Community as a whole. There may be some other some groups (such as retirees, crucial customers or clients, sympathetic public policy makers, or any discrete group with collateral interests who make up the remainder of the Base Audience).

Perfecting the ability to systematically communicate with these groups and maintain a relationship is where most corporate and organizational initiatives fail. The process requires discipline, constant analysis, feedback, and action taken immediately or preemptively, as required. Base Audience success is almost always dependent on the First-Line Supervisor. Special Publics pay attention, on their own, talk to Top Management directly, but also (and often) throughout the Base Audience as well.

Note the arrows moving out from the Leader. This is a reminder that, to really benefit from this process, leadership must enforce the process of cascading communication from the top of the organization all the way out until the public or target audiences are reached, if that is the goal. The crucial insight of this model is that failure to energize the base and capitalize on what often are hundreds and, potentially, thousands of communicators is the chief cause of defeat, delay, or base confusion.

Also note the arrows going into the Base Audience circles, from the outer most ring to the inner most ring. Failure to systematically cascade information outward destroys the opportunity to have a continuous flow of incoming information, intelligence, and responses from the communities of interest that each of these Base Audience segments connects to.

Most successful initiatives require effective intelligence, input, and issue surveillance. The success of this entire approach rests on top management and, in particular, the leader of the organization, and the nature of the relationship desired with the front line supervisor.

There are five predictable, usually ongoing mistakes that cause internal communication efforts to fail:

1. **Too much attention is paid to Special Publics.** Chances are that we like these Special Publics. They are more like management in terms of leadership and, perhaps, even social station. Some may be famous, rich, or powerful. It is just more fun to deal with the publics that seem to be ready to deal with us.
Why is this a failure strategy? Because every one of these Special Publics has its own agenda that predominates and dominates its reason for being connected to you and your issue. Special Publics may abandon you, or bug you if their interests are being underserved or ignored.

2. **Failure to plug in your base.** When the Special Publics have questions about motivation, strategy, decision making, and even results, they move around Leaders and Top Management, and talk to friends, relatives, acquaintances, and informants located throughout your Base Audience. If the Base Audience’s response is, “Management never tells us anything,” you can bet that you have given the Special Publics more power than you intended.

3. **Avoid answering questions the base is asking.** When members of the community—including public policy makers, potential beneficiaries, or victims—inquire or are concerned about your strategies, they too will check with your base rather than with senior management. Once again, if the Base Audience is out of touch, disconnected, or disgruntled, the community will get mixed signals at best, if not outright internally sponsored opposition to the key ideas you are proposing and communicating about.

4. **Allow Upper and Middle Management to block or control communication.** This is silo country. The job of these managers is to sanitize, prioritize, homogenize, and detoxify any information getting to Top Management or Leaders. This group I refer to as the “ladies in waiting” (maybe the boss will stumble today and one of us will get the job, at least for a period of time). In all my years of working in this arena, breaking down these barriers, punching holes in the silos has been an almost insurmountable task. The one strategy that does work is to leapfrog over these individuals and have the boss go directly to First-line Supervisors, Employees, and even the Community. Force them to pay attention to what is going on in the organization rather than just looking up, blocking key information, and watching what the boss is doing, thinking, or deciding, all the while protecting their own turf.

Get ready for the complaints, whining, and pushback of Upper Management. Here is what you are going to hear, “If you insist on going around us, you diminish and, in fact, destroy our authority.” “How can we be expected to run the business if the boss can do and runs all the time, whenever he or she feels like it?” “I worked a long time to get here, now I want to have the control I thought I would get.”

5. **Engagement failure by Top Management and Leaders.** This is the most crucial ingredient to any employee communication strategy. Leaders must have the courage and the strategic foresight to leapfrog Middle Management and have an ongoing conversation and relationship with First-line Supervisors. First-line Supervisors are kind of like Crew Chiefs or Master Sergeants in the military. The place falls apart unless these individuals are there to run it in a knowledgeable, useful, and helpful way every day. It is the boss’ job to get out to the Supervisors on a regular basis to brief them, coddle them, compliment them, cite their successes, help them learn from their failures, and force them to pull information from those above them (in Middle and Upper Management).
Can it be this simple, you ask? In practice, it requires discipline and a genuine commitment by managers at every level to recognize the need to cascade information further down the process. By the same token, managers need to make sure that appropriate feedback gets pushed up the line and actually reaches top management.

Management’s goal in employee communications is to connect with and direct 51 percent of those who matter. If 51 percent of those who matter can work together, the success of virtually any organization will be assured.
Ridgeway Strategic Audience Analysis Worksheet

SPECIAL PUBLICS

LAWYERS
ADMINISTRATION
CIVIC AND PHI-LANTHROPIC GROUPS
ENVIRONMENTALISTS
PHYSICIANS
BLOGS
LOBBYISTS
TRADE GROUPS
ORGANIZED OPPOSITION
TEACHERS
NEW MEDIA
LEGAL MEDIA

BASE AUDIENCE

LEADER
STATE REGULATORS
CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS PEOPLE
LOWER SCHOOL OFFICIALS
LOCAL CONGRESSMEN
UNION LEADERSHIP
CIVIC AND PHI-LANTHROPIC GROUPS
RELI GIOUS LEADERS
QUALITY CONTROL
INVESTORS
FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS
MIDDLE MANAGEMENT
TOP MANAGEMENT
EMPLOYEES
EMPLOYEE FAMILIES
COMMUNITY

Messages to the Community
Feedback From the Community

Organize Special Publics in Priority Order
With Most Important Toward the Point

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.
LET'S GET SERIOUS ABOUT STRATEGY

Strategy is a driving force in any business or organization. It's the intellectual force that helps organize, prioritize, and energize what organizations do. No strategy; no energy. No strategy; no direction. No strategy; no momentum. No strategy; no impact.

Strategy is a unique mixture of mental energy, injected into an organization through communication, which results in behavior that achieves organizational objectives.

For public relations practitioners, being strategic is the difference between being just another member of the support staff and being an essential participant on the management team with the ability to make strategic contributions to the overall management process.

Strategy. Sometimes I think there's more talk, wishful thinking, and disappointment over this topic than almost any other in the field of public relations. Practitioners suffer enormous anxiety and frustration over not "being at the table," "guiding the boss," "just being heard," or "just getting invited to strategy meetings."

So, let's have a serious, candid, and useful discussion about two essential elements of the strategy – 1) What it is and 2) Your strategic mindset.

WHAT IS STRATEGY?

Strategy is, first of all, a state of mind, because a strategist is relentlessly and pragmatically results oriented. Strategy is the combination of attitudes, purposes, possible actions, and decisions bundled together as options for decision and implementation by management. Strategy can:

- Give energy and momentum to a series of actions.
- Deny or drain energy and momentum.
- Draw attention.
- Confuse, obfuscate, and blur.
- Distract and disinform.
- Focus and intensify.
- Motivate and move people to action.
- Surprise, overwhelm, and dislocate.
• Ignore all previous assumptions, but still create a win.
• Create new directions by recombining old assumptions with new insights.

IT'S ABOUT HOW YOU THINK

Strategy begins in the mind. It's a mental set. It's a method of thinking before it becomes a style of action. To be a strategist, it's essential to understand the three fundamental steps to creating strategy:

• A clear understanding of the issues, problems, or questions to be addressed.
• A method of analysis or pattern of recognition.
• A translation process that enables management to understand and act on the insights and advantages of the strategic approach they will select from the options presented.

GETTING TO THE TABLE

If you're one of those who is frustrated or anxious about being out of the loop, don't feel alone. I have some first-hand news from the front lines of management. During the last 14 months I've made presentations and conducted workshops about strategy for security directors, HR managers, corporate counsel IS managers, financial officers, purchasing agents, plant managers, and hundreds of public relations practitioners.

The news? Every single one of these groups has as its top priority getting to the table, which means advising the boss and playing a key strategic role. There is a nearly constant corporate staff rush hour, with everyone heading towards the boss' office or to wherever the organization's strategic decisions are being made.

Ironically, in the past few months I've also had the opportunity to advise and make presentations before groups of chief executives. They have a rather surprising point of view — something like this: "Please spare me from another amateur corporate strategist — the person who doesn't have a clue about how the company operates, my goals, or our critical strategic needs; but who yaps at me every day and calls it strategy. What I'm hearing is 'Appreciate my work,' 'Recognize what I do,' or 'Give me a leg up on the other staff functions because I'm loyal."

While you may feel that the boss "really needs to understand what you do," to the boss that's just more yap yap yap, whine whine whine. Translation? When you can truly help the business in some substantive way, you will make it to the table. But if all you offer is how to get a news release out or the standard tactics from the pr tool kit, you're not going to be invited to the table — at least while the discussions and decision making are taking place.

HELPING MOVE THE ORGANIZATION

Bosses expect good staff work. The question is, does your staff work help those who actually know the business to do the business better, every day, from their perspective. If that's not what you have to contribute, your limited value as an advisor to management will be quickly discovered and you'll be excluded from the table.

I'm continually asked to review public relations plans and "strategies." It's striking to note that the vast majority of these activities have absolutely nothing to do with the strategic goals of the organization — at any level. But, they are interesting and sometimes even award-winning public relations projects.

Bosses need to be with revenue producers, cost managers, business operations strategists. These areas are of greatest concern to them. Does the boss ever want to hear from staff executives about their concerns and strategies? Of course, if what is shared provides:

• Valuable, useful, applicable advice beyond what the boss already knows;
• Well-timed, truly useful intuitive insights; and/or
• Advanced warning and options for managing trouble or opportunity, and their unintended consequences.

WHERE MANY PRACTITIONERS FAIL

Staff functions like public relations are not constant players at strategy meetings for some rather obvious reasons:

• Public relations solutions aren't necessarily a critical part of every business decision.

• Whining about the importance of the media has only limited value.

• Discussions about releasing information before the facts are known are disconcerting.

• Rarely are media concerns the first priority in any management decision.

• Spilling your guts is not a strategy.

• Public relations isn't viewed as a bottom-line function – because it isn't.¹

STRATEGIES MUST MEET THESE TESTS

1. Does it help the boss achieve his or her objectives?

2. Does it advance the purposes and goals of the entire enterprise?

3. Is it truly necessary, even if the answers to 1 and 2 above are yes?

4. Will the business or some aspect of the business fail or not succeed without it?

In most strategic environments what is most important is the ability to do and recommend less – but make what is suggested substantive and very important.

One clear lesson: dump the cynicism about management and get on the team. If your boss' team won't have you, find a team that will.

SO MANY "STRATEGIES" FAIL BECAUSE THEY:

• Don't serve a genuinely strategic interest.

• Don't have sufficient support and management "lift."

• Are developed without input and participation from the boss or someone the boss trusts.

• Usurp territory of others.

• Aren't related to those currently controlling the business.

• Are poor, unconvincing advocacy.

(For more information on this subject, contact the author by E-mail at jel@e911.com or explore his Web site at www.e911.com.)

¹ I know this point of view is upsetting, but it's absolutely correct. Why do public relations and communication activities take the first hit every time a CEO wants to cut expenses or bump up the stock price? Why is it that so many corporate public relations departments have been decimated or that even those with operating and marketing divisions are small? The answer is the boss doesn't believe that public relations is a bottom-line function, and we've never been able to conclusively demonstrate the bottom-line impact of this staff activity.

Besides, it's the wrong argument. Any time a staff function within an organization argues that it's a bottom-line function, it will be judged that way. If you live by the bottom-line function argument, you'll die by the bottom-line function argument. If management truly believed that staff functions were bottom-line issues, corporate staffs would be enormous, and we wouldn't be "wasting our time" trying to figure out how to be strategic. This argument is a lousy strategy for convincing the boss to do anything unless, like operating departments, you can prove it.
HOW TO DEVELOP THE MIND OF A STRATEGIST

Strategy is a mindset, a way of thinking about decision making, work issues, even a wide variety of life-related issues. Michel Robert in his 1993 book, Strategy Pure and Simple: How Winning CEOs Outthink Their Competition1 defines strategic thinking as, "...a fresh approach to the subject of strategy. It identifies the key factors that dictate the direction of an organization and is a process that the organization's management uses to set direction and articulate their vision."

In his newest volume, Strategy Pure and Simple II: How Winning Companies Dominate Their Competitor2 Mr. Robert makes the key point that, "...the companies that will prosper and outpace their competitors during the next two decades will be those that will be able to outthink their competitors strategically... the winning CEO in the future will be the one who can craft a singular strategy that gives the company a distinctive advantage." Becoming a strategist means committing to a mental approach that outthinks the competition, or the opposition, or the media and produces a distinctive or unique approach, series of steps, solution options, or direction choices.

It's easy to list these outcomes but much tougher to consistently achieve them. Keep in mind that we're talking about a management process, not the creative process. Creativity and strategy are different. I'll address the differences in a future column. Today let's help you learn how to develop the mind of a strategist. Let's begin by helping you assess your strategic tendencies.

A LITTLE SELF-ANALYSIS

How strategic are you? What's your strategic mindset? Here's an exercise you can do privately to determine just how strategic you really are. Assess yourself against these strategic attributes:

1. Inconsistency: The strategist is intentionally inconsistent; in fact with a true strategist, inconsistency is a virtue. Strategists relentlessly question all assumptions. The goal is always a different approach and identifying new options.

Are you predictable? Do you approach problems in the very same way, is what you recommend and think about virtually the same every time?


2. **Conclusive Approaches:** The strategist seeks the force and impact of a conclusive result even though that result may only be one of a series of increments and often not terribly exciting or very visible.

Is your approach always to try to find the "big idea" or, if that's impossible, to "do things," or to create activity and action, or to simply generate visibility?

3. **Substantive Intensity:** A strategist applies focus and intensity to the most critical parts of a problem or opportunity through fact finding, truth seeking, and reality testing.

Do you focus primarily on the communication aspects of an issue? Can you see problems and issues and their priorities from the boss' perspective? Do you make operating recommendations, or do you merely suggest language changes or media contact that produces mindless visibility?

4. **Laggerness, Entropy:** A strategist understands the priority and sequence of doing something and also of doing nothing. There are always a variety of options for action, including non-action.

Are you a person with a bias for action, attack, stuff, things, and the irrepressible urge to tell people?

5. **Pragmatism:** A strategist attempts to clarify, refine, and carefully target; to deal in facts, truth, and reality-based information; and, wherever possible, to forecast results that can actually or reasonably be achieved as well as the unintended consequences of various action options. A strategist usually forecasts underwhelming results.

Is your focus on the words more than analysis of problems and opportunities? Can you, do you accurately forecast the intended and unintended results of your recommendations?

**A USEFUL MODEL**

The model I like most for describing the strategic thinking process was developed by Kenichi Ohmae as presented in his book, *The Mind of the Strategist: Business Planning for Competitive Advantage*' The epiphany, for me, came on page 14 of this book through an illustration called, "The Mind of a Strategist," reproduced here on page 3 with permission from The McGraw-Hill Companies.

The powerful insight of Mr. Ohmae's approach is his analysis of the three management thinking methodologies:

- Mechanical systems thinking (I call it "linear thinking");
- Intuition; and
- Strategic thinking.

Let me talk about each of them as I've come to understand them and teach them to others.

---

Linear Thinking

The linear thinker is the manager, boss, or specialist; the physician, the economist, the engineer, the scientist, or your typical CEO.

This thinking is typified by a more chronological, more linear approach. Linear thinkers are the people who not only plan with the end in mind, but actually use a structured outline format, chronology, order of manufacture, etc. It's the doctor, lawyer, engineer, MBA, operations manager, boss.

They are the people that public relations people or any creative or intuitive person loves to hate because linear thinkers seem so organized, so "logical," so ... well, linear. Very few public relations people can be linear thinkers for long. This is the reason why few public relations professionals ever become CEOs of businesses other than public relations agencies. And, my guess is that most PR agency CEOs would rather be in the field with clients anyway.

With the linear thinker, the end to be achieved is identified early (maybe years earlier), and a plan is constructed backwards to include every detail, up to and through today.

Intuitive Thinkers

Public relations professionals and other creative people such as artists, painters, news reporters, and writers are intuitive thinkers. Intuitive people don't indulge in much truly analytical thought. The goal is to find the great idea and/or the most interesting or creative solution - the big idea.

The "Jell-O Phenomenon" is the best way to describe how the intuitive thinker works. You've all made Jell-O or at least know what it is. You boil the water, stir in the powder until it's dissolved, put the bowl in the refrigerator, and at some point in time - we're not exactly sure when (there may be a deal between God and General Foods) - Jell-O happens. It's an amazing mystery.

While the linear thinker is driven by a timeline, a chronology, and a structured outline with basically all of its elements known, the intuitive thinker is simply driven by a deadline. There is little long-range thinking about how things will turn out until the very last minute just before the deadline (when the Jell-O Phenomenon happens). It's unexplainable. It's a mystery.

With the intuitive thinker, no deadline, no progress. It's this unexplainability, the lack of evidence, which upsets the linear thinker (read boss) and frustrates the intuitive thinker (read PR person/reporter) because, "they (linear thinkers) just don't get it."
Strategic Thinkers

The strategic thinker, as you can tell by Mr. Ohmae's diagram, takes an entirely different approach - on purpose. Inconsistency is one of the key attributes of strategic thinking. It's consciously, relentlessly, purposely following different approaches. The strategist is intentionally going for a result that no one expects or may recognize.

Liberally interpreting Ohmae, strategic thinking is a process involving four segments:

- Problem dissection;
- Analysis and weighing of constituents;
- Scenario development based on different constituent configurations or options; and
- Creative re-integration.

When you examine Ohmae's diagram, you notice just how different the three thinking styles are:

- The linear thinker moves symmetrical concepts around, more to reconfigure than to reinvent.
- The intuitive thinker seeks the critical fact, idea, notion, or insight among a host of other potential ideas and concepts.
- The strategic thinker is, literally, deconstructing the problem in ways that are unique.
- The pattern of assumptions made by the intuitive and linear thinkers are totally challengeable in the strategist's mind.

As you compare the solutions, you see a graphic depiction of the difference in the product these thinking styles produce.

The linear thinker's result is symmetrical, it adds up, has balance, and to a certain degree resembles the original problem.

The intuitive solution is the classic "silver bullet."

The strategist's solution often looks very little like the original problem. And, in fact, while utilizing elements of the original problem, a distinct and unique solution is the result. A strategist's goal is to transform the problem prototype into a command opportunity, a command strategy, a series of actions leading to a powerful result or series of results.

Clearly, good managers and decision-makers, even staff people, are situational thinkers. They can be intuitive. They can be strategic. But, for an organization to execute a strategy there must be a process by which strategy is developed and then translated into language and action plans that everyone can understand and support.

In the next issue of strategy, I'll talk specifically about how managers make strategic decisions and how intuitive thinkers and strategists can structure advice and counsel in ways that make both more understandable, acceptable, and usable for management.

(For more information on this subject, contact the author by Email at jel@e9ll.com or explore his Web site at WWW.e911.com.)
HOW MANAGERS MAKE STRATEGIC DECISIONS

Each year an astounding number of books and articles appear around the world on the subject of management decision making, leadership, goal setting, and achieving victory (or at least management success).

No matter which prescriptions or labels from creative management gurus you choose, there is a recognizable pattern of management decision making. The model that emerges has six important components with an optimum order. For decisions that matter, all six components will come into play. Omitting or skipping a component or changing the order is how mistakes happen, damage occurs, careers as well as companies get redefined.

Each of the six components has three powerful common elements:

1. **Factual basis**: What we actually know, can count on, trust, or see.

2. **Real-time**: On issues that matter, ideally there is a very small gap in time between decision and action. The larger the separation between decision and action the greater the likelihood that significant factual change may make a portion or all of the action less than optimum.

3. **Outcome focus**: Strategic decision making is always about the future. The past can only be re-imagined, reconfigured, rewritten, relived, and reinterpreted. It can’t be changed. Looking forward allows us to set the past aside and deal in today and tomorrow. This is a much more positive and controlling approach.

THE IDEAL PROCESS

In theory, management decision-making goals are easily identified: decisions are rational; reasoning is logical. If the process can achieve rationality and logic, the decisions made and actions taken will be unemotional and incremental.

Management decisions achieving this level of clarity will seem well motivated and effective.

THE REALITY OF THE PROCESS

If you’re having trouble recognizing the ideal as being consistent with how you see managers make decisions in your work environment, that’s because, of course, reality is quite different. More typical managerial decision making is incident driven; management has little choice in the size, the scope, sequence, or timing of events.
Situations are often so underfactualized that logic is very difficult, if not impossible. Information is always insufficient.

Often the more important the decision, the more likely it will be pushed off until it has to be made on an urgent (panicky?) basis where management has little choice but to invest enormous amounts of emotion and energy into the execution and rationalization of decisions and timing. Real communication is either non-existent, via the grapevine, or defensive.

Results are inconclusive. What is achieved is not nearly what was contemplated. So, the exact same process gets repeated, several times.

Decision making this way shows management to be insufficiently prepared. Management won’t like it, but move on to the next set of decisions.

**CHAOS = OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS**

This chaotic decision-making approach is the opportunity environment for the strategic public relations advisor. The challenge is translating what we so easily and intuitively arrive at into a fact-based, real-time, outcome-focused approach management can actively absorb. Your contribution to the decision making process will insert your knowledge into the selection of a course of action. And, you could be asked to stick around to help with other issues, too.

In strategy No. 2 the public relations practitioner was described as an almost purely intuitive thinker. Understanding thinking styles of managers and those who advise them illustrates the need to appropriately transform information so its true value can be absorbed into strategic objectives, and to help manage some of the chaos, too.

Since most managers are predominately process thinkers and linear decision makers, information coming their way that doesn’t neatly fit into some part of their thinking style is noted, but is then discarded or becomes quickly irrelevant.

**PROVIDING STRATEGIC INPUT**

How information is structured when presented to management is very important. No matter how bold the solution proposed, its obvious commonsense, or its absolute applicability, managers can’t absorb it unless it fits into their processing capacity, builds on their intuitive skills and experience, and allows them critical space to assimilate. If it also happens to be brilliant and creative, that’s okay but often not essential.

Brevity is crucial. Figure 1, Strategic Decision making Worksheet (see pg. 4), is a valuable tool on one side of a single sheet of paper. Remember, were talking strategy here, not planning. Avoid overkill. Other good reasons for brevity are:

- There will be just a few minutes to explain it (600 words or less).
- Concentrated, well-structured information is easier to include and more likely to achieve ownership by others.
- Most critical decisions are made based on experience, intuition, and some recently gathered facts.
- If the information is provided in a manual with 10 tabs and says “Plan,” before the strategy and goals are even read, they may have to be re-done and will probably be ignored anyway.

**THE MANAGEMENT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

The public relations practitioner can easily master all six elements. If the “strategy” can’t be adequately addressed in this structure, it’s probably not a strategy:

1. **Situation:** A brief description of the nature of the issue, problem, or situation that requires decision, action, or study. This is the factual basis or “Here’s what we know now.”
2. **Analysis/Assumptions:** A brief description of what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens or presents an opportunity to the organization. Include the one or two key assumptions that validate the analysis.

Managers always need to know why, but not in great detail. They’re also interested in the intelligence you’ve gathered or know about that supports your analysis and assumptions.

3. **The Goal:** A clear, concise statement of the task to be accomplished (sometimes the reason or purpose for accomplishing it) or the target to be reached and why.

Goals keep everyone focused. Useful goals are understandable, achievable, brief, positive, and time/deadline sensitive.

4. **Options:** Provide at least three response options for the situation as presented and analyzed.

This is the area where intuitive thinkers fail frequently. They focus on the silver bullet. If you have only one recommendation and there are even a couple of questions about it, it will die and you’ll be out of the discussion for the duration.

For example, what if you’re asked, “What if we do nothing?” Doing nothing should always be an option in every strategy, and thoroughly examined. Recommend your optimal choice and recommend things you can and will do. Be prepared to do something in between the things you’ve recommended.

5. **Recommendation:** This is specifically the choice you would make among the options presented. The recommendation is usually selected on the basis of which option will cause the least number of unintended negative consequences.

This is where you earn your paycheck. The boss always wants to know what you would do if you were in his/her shoes. Be prepared to walk through a similar sort of analysis for each of the options proposed.

6. **Justification:** These are the reactions or circumstances that could arise resulting from the options you suggested or by doing nothing. Every management decision or action has intended and unintended consequences that can be forecast. Inadequate provision for consequences is what sometimes can sabotage an otherwise useful strategy.

This is a strategic approach. It leads to productive, focused planning. Use it and you’ll get to help managers at every level in their strategic decision.

(For more information on this subject, contact the author by e-mail at jel@e911.com or explore his Web site at www.e911.com.)
FIGURE 1: STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING WORKSHEET
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUE:</th>
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<th>SITUATION:</th>
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<tr>
<td>A brief description of the nature of the issues, problem, or situation that requires decision, action, or study.</td>
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<tr>
<th>ANALYSIS/ASSUMPTIONS:</th>
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<td>A description of what the situation means, what its implications are, and how it threatens or presents an opportunity to the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<th>GOAL:</th>
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<tr>
<td>A clear, concise statement of the task to be accomplished.</td>
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<tr>
<th>OPTIONS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provide at least three response options for the situation as presented and analyzed.</td>
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<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDATION:</th>
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<tr>
<td>The choice you would make among the options presented. The recommendation is usually selected on the basis of which option will cause the least number of unintended consequences.</td>
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<tr>
<th>JUSTIFICATION:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive or negative unintended consequences, reactions, or circumstances that could arise from the options you suggested or by doing nothing.</td>
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</table>
HOW TO BECOME A STRATEGIC PLAYER . . .
GETTING MANAGEMENT’S ATTENTION

Becoming a truly strategic asset to management is one of the most challenging aspects of the communications profession. For the majority of practitioners, when they are finally allowed into the inner sanctum, the boss tells them, “Here’s what we have to say. Go and say it,” or, “Get your buddies in the press to print this.” This happens because:

1. The PR advice usually offered (and expected by management) is related to tactics (i.e., news releases, making statements, shaping words, and responding).

2. The advice given is focused around the “why” of communications rather than advancing strategic business issues.

3. The ideas presented are out of sync with the goals and operational needs of the business or simply too late in the process.

4. Managers see little or no strategic relevance.

5. On issues that matter, lawyers, human resources, other staff, and consultants have more “juice” with management.

BECOME STRATEGIC

Being a strategic player begins with becoming strategic yourself, but from the boss’ or client’s perspective. Who should the boss listen to? Whose advice is acted on? Who does the boss call? Why should the boss call you? When bosses and corporate leaders talk about the kinds of support they need from those around them, a very interesting list develops. Bosses need people who:

- Listen, that is really hear and respond to what is heard and hear enough to respond appropriately before blurting out some solution.

- Are usefully intuitive (even the best managers can use more of that sixth sense).

- Give useful feedback, promptly:
  - Data feedback—new information.
  - Feeling feedback—the emotional temperature of an organization or its constituents.
Intelligence—information derived from surveillance and monitoring of issues and ideas critical to the organization.

- Inspire and add useful emotional and psychological energy to the management process and other people.
- Are trustable (they can keep their mouths shut).
- Bring instant insight (they have the ability to distill useful lessons and value from the contrast of ideas, information, and experience).
- Are complete thinkers (see Strategy No 3).
- Are pragmatists (individuals who can make useful, positive, constructive suggestions—on the spot).
- Understand the dollar value of time, are brief and to the point with a bias for action: Do it now, fix it now, repair it now, and ask it now.
- Understand the difference between strategy, planning, and tactical action.
- Provide useful advance information.

BEHAVE STRATEGICALLY

Here are some behaviors I’ve observed time and again that make an individual strategic.

1. **Altitude/Perspective**
   A strategist views and analyzes issues, problems, and situations from a mental altitude sufficient to disconnect assumptions, preconceptions, and observes the patterns.

2. **Momentum/Motion**
   The strategist can take a given goal or series of targets and develop an integrated set of forward-moving steps to achieve them.

3. **Pragmatism/Reality Checks**
   There are always immovable objects, ideas, patterns, turf politics, habits, and customs that need to be avoided, overcome, overturned, accommodated, or eliminated. The strategist evaluates the most doable courses of action among all and the consequences of various approaches.

4. **Engagement/Adaptability**
   Strategy is dynamic. Once action begins on any strategy, every move has the potential to require whole new approaches. A strategist is there observing, analyzing, revising, anticipating, guiding, and coaching.

ANALYZE YOUR APPROACH

Can you be an effective strategist in your organization? Answering these questions will help you assess yourself.

1. Can you separate yourself from your own predisposition and habits to truly look at situations and issues dispassionately?
2. Do you add positive energy and purpose to management action, even when decisions are made that ignore, seriously change, or are the opposite of your strategic advice?
3. Can you routinely get very different organizational constituencies (lawyers, engineers, operators, managers, etc.) to listen to you and use what you recommend?
4. Do you get the organization to move in productive directions and, once moving, stay the course?
5. Does management routinely expect truly strategic contributions from you, whether they solicit them or not?
6. Does the boss call you before thinking begins on making a tough decision?
7. Do you wait for the boss to call?
8. When bad news happens, do you get it to the boss quickly with on-the-spot impact analysis and action options?

BE AN AGENT OF TOMORROW

One of the most interesting strategic techniques for providing advance information to management was devised by Jerr Boschee and Scott Meyer while they were at the Control Data Corporation some years ago.
They called it “Exposure Reporting.” We have since reconfigured their concept into “Exposure Management and Surveillance.”

**EXPOSURE MANAGEMENT AND SURVEILLANCE**

Exposure Management and Surveillance is the purposeful monitoring of key corporate exposure sources and issues.

The goals of exposure management and surveillance are to:

- Provide a snapshot of the corporation’s current exposures;
- Send an early-warning signal identifying issues or corporate actions that could lead to significant public attention;
- Alert management to possible threats and opportunities;
- Anticipate planned and unplanned visibility;
- Prepare management to act promptly, conclusively, pragmatically;
- Mitigate, early, problems and threats;
- Estimate the potential organizational impact and exposure from threats, opportunities and circumstances; and
- Suggest an outline of actions and options being taken to manage the impact of both current and future exposures.

The information rarely exceeds three typed pages and is so valuable and vital that its distribution is limited to very senior management.

The report lists key events in six categories:

- Areas of sensitivity;
- Significant media contacts;
- News releases, high-profile events scheduled;

BENEFITS TO MANAGEMENT

The Exposure Management and Surveillance process provides a number of important strategic benefits to the organization’s leadership and the communications function.

- These critical reports demonstrate to senior management that the public relations/communications function was capable of managing problems and crisis rather than simply reacting and reporting;
- Senior management is put squarely in the middle of the strategic planning process; they receive options for consideration and the ability to question strategy and tactics before the organization acts or reacts;
- Those in communications and key staff functions redefine their jobs and job purposes in terms of vulnerabilities and contingencies;
- More problematic scenarios rise to the surface and get more thoughtful, early consideration (e.g., the death of a key executive, plant explosion, drug bust, pandemic, or employee violence);
- Response time is improved because readiness is enhanced so dramatically;
- Management will tolerate interruptions from communicators and, perhaps, other staff functions more readily because they have been sensitized by the information they received earlier in exposure reports; and
- This tool can change the behavior of line managers to thinking more about vulnerabilities, response strategies, and contingency plans; in the best case, they are driven to call their communications advisors and counselors more quickly, and perhaps even rely more on their advice.

---

1 Private correspondence between the author and Scott Meyer.
• Over time, the exposure report and surveillance process may begin to reveal even larger numbers of potential vulnerabilities as managers and leaders become more sensitive to the real-time nature of visibility management requirements; and

• The communications function is enhanced because it is now in a position to help executives obey a fundamental law of managerial survival—no surprises, in combination with getting ready more correctly, the first time.

ISN'T THIS JUST ISSUES MANAGEMENT?

Senior executives often associate Issues Management with the charts, phases, and complexity that are perceived as soft, with little immediate impact and value, although there may be significant long-term value.

Exposure Management and Surveillance focuses on current high value topics and the direct relevance of threats, perceptions, actions, and risks from the perspective of the manager and leader. Where used, it gets acceptance because it fills a key void in management information needs. The approach is helpful, positive, insightful, early, and relevant.

The array of issues and subjects that are monitored in the typical exposure management and surveillance program are illustrated in Figure 1 below.

(For more information on this subject, contact the author by e-mail at jel@e911.com, explore his Web site at www.e911.com, check out his blog at www.e911.com/crisissurublog.html, or connect with him through LinkedIn at www.linkedin.com/in/jameslukaszewski.)

FIGURE 1
EXPOSURE MANAGEMENT AND SURVEILLANCE PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase I</th>
<th>Identify Specific Corporate Exposure Sources, Issues, and Threats</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Identify Actions, Decisions, Events, And Activities to Be Monitored (Select those with special significance for impact and threat analysis in 'B'.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activist demonstrations/threats</td>
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<td>Angry neighbors</td>
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<td>Competitive breakthroughs</td>
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<td>Congressional testimony</td>
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<td>Corporate liability</td>
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<td>Criminal investigations</td>
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<td>Employee unrest</td>
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<td>Executive speeches</td>
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<td>Government investigations</td>
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<td>Hazardous waste</td>
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<td>High-profile litigation</td>
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<td>International sanctions</td>
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<td>Key executive public appearances</td>
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<td>Labor negotiations or actions</td>
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<td>Major site – specific issues</td>
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<td>Risk management plan (RMP)</td>
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<td>Serious environmental cases</td>
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<td>Significance news interviews</td>
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<td>Web/news media exposures</td>
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<td>Whistleblowers</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase II</th>
<th>Forecast Impact/Threat level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. (Score each of these items a value of 1-19, where 19 equals the highest level of impact)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. (Score each of these items a value of 1-19, where 19 equals the highest degree of threat)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adverse court decisions</td>
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<td>Angry employees</td>
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<td>Anti-corporate action</td>
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<td>Congressional hearings</td>
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<td>Cyber attacks</td>
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<td>Emergency potential</td>
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<td>Emerging issue or problem</td>
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<td>Exquisite threat</td>
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<td>Instrument of managers or employees</td>
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<td>Internal documents leaked</td>
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<td>Major management decisions</td>
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<td>Major media story</td>
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<td>New media contacts</td>
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<td>Plant closing</td>
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<td>Product problems</td>
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<td>Prosecution</td>
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<td>Protectors</td>
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<td>Regulatory problems</td>
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<td>Takeovers</td>
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<td>Whistleblowers</td>
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<th>Phase III</th>
<th>Issue Confidential Limited Distribution Exposure Reports</th>
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<td>(Write a synopsis for each of the issues or threats listed in Phase II. Each synopsis should explore why the issue or threat is of utmost importance to the organization, the specific impact to be expected, and the consequences failing to be ready.)</td>
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<td>Number all copies.</td>
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<td>Collect copies after 72 hours.</td>
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<td>Review surveillance and exposure goals and adjust readiness plans and strategies to reflect new information, and current situation, quarterly.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Phase IV</th>
<th>Meet Quarterly for Exposure Review</th>
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<tr>
<td>Identify new vulnerabilities and risks</td>
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<td>Eliminate old vulnerabilities and risks</td>
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<td>Provide direct feedback for revisions to readiness plans</td>
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“Who are they? Who are these people who come to work here every day? What are they about? Why can’t we communicate with them? Why won’t they listen? Why won’t they just do what they’re told to do?” – the words of countless frustrated managers.

Getting through to workers to influence their behavior, attitudes, and work habits is one of the most frustrating aspects of organizational management. How can senior executives, supervisors, and managers generate enough loyalty, motivation, and focus to move the organization forward each day despite rumors, uncertainty, “failed opportunities,” abrupt shifts in direction, obvious mistakes in decision making, and the daily sense that there really is no one in charge, no plan, or no strategy in place to meet future contingencies.

The greatest continuing area of weakness in management practice is the human dimension. In good times or bad, there seems to be little real understanding of the relationships between managers, among employees, and interactions between the two. When there are problems, everyone acknowledges that the cause often is “a communications breakdown.” So now what?

Enter the management communications strategist whose objective is to rethink, refocus, and then restructure the goals and objectives of this critical part of effective organizational management. The strategist might use these steps.

STEP 1: IDENTIFYING AND CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

The analysis begins by challenging some of the more closely held assumptions that appear to underlie modern employee communications theory.

1. Employee communications is a staff function owned collaborative (or combatively) by public relations and human resources.
2. More communication is better.
3. Message uniformity and consistency are key ingredients to effective delivery and reception.
4. The manager’s role is to run the business.
5. Just tell the story right and don’t molly coddle employees.
STEP 2: RETHINKING THE ORGANIZATIONAL MIX

Redefine who comes to work each day based on actual behavior. Look for useful, insightful ways of drawing management’s attention to how it can achieve success by productively reassessing the nature of the human forces it has at its disposal and by looking at the business from a more employee-driven perspective.

Employee behavior in any organization of 50 or more can be divided into up to six behavior categories:

1. Those who Work To Live (WTL), 50%.
2. Those who are Disengaged, but still Work To Live (DWTL), 20%.
3. Those who Live To Work (LTW), 15%.
4. Those who are Dysfunctional, but still Live To Work (DLTW), 7%.
5. Self-Appointed IN or Near The Source (SAINNTS), 4%.
6. The Disheartened, Disgruntled, Disoriented, Unconvinceable Victims needing a Victory over something (D³UV²s), 25%.
   - 12.5% Permanent
   - 12.5% Temporary

Yes, yes, yes – those of you who are mathematical eagles will recognize that there may be a mathematical anomaly here, but remember that this is a strategic exercise. Our analysis of these categories will resolve this apparent discrepancy.

1. **Work To Live (WTL)**

   Those who work to live comprise the largest portion – often half or more – of the workforce. These are the folks who genuinely make the organization successful. That’s because no matter what, they come to work on time; no matter what, they will do what is asked of them – provided they can understand it. And they go home on time.

   They ask for very little in return. Don’t ask them to join company parties; don’t ask them to stand up and cheer; don’t ask them for great outbursts of loyalty; don’t ask for or mandate their involvement. When such opportunities arise, some of these employees may take part, but it will be on their terms, at their discretion, and in their own time. For these individual’s life begins outside the plant gate at quitting time.

   Work is their mechanism for having a life. That’s why it’s hard for management to appreciate these employees’ true motivations. Actually, they have only one – to go home on time, to get back to their real lives.

2. **Disengaged, but still Work To Live (DWTL)**

   These employees have personal or work-related problems so devastating that they are unable to function effectively. But, they show up on time every day and are surprised that no one has noticed their problems or kicked them out the door.

3. **Live To Work (LTW)**

   Undoubtedly, those who are reading this analysis are among those who live to work – the folks who come early, stay late, and work to move the organization forward. LTWs are on the program, work hard to understand what the boss and management are looking for, and try to make it happen every day of the week. LTWs often resent anyone who goes home on time. LTWs are the forces of tomorrow in the organization.
4. **Dysfunctional, but Still Live To Work (DLTW)**

The DLTWs also come early and stay late. But their goal is to prevent or stop the WTLs from accomplishing anything meaningful. That’s because the DWTLs love today just the way it is. DWTLs especially want yesterday to stay just the way it was. DWTLs resent progress. DWTLs are the forces of yesterday, and they are very powerful.

5. **Self-Appointed IN or Near the Source (SAINNTS)**

Usually a group no larger than 4% of the entire organization, often just a handful of knowledgeable people, working independently, who have appointed themselves the official interpreters for what the bosses do and what they mean. SAINNTS come in all sizes and shapes, and from all parts of the business.

6. **The Disheartened, Disgruntled, Disoriented, Unconvinceable Victims needing a victory over something or someone, probably you (D³UV²s – pronounced doves)**

Perhaps as high as 25% of the workforce, these people bring powerful, negative energy to every situation. They assure the failure of most positive ideas and concepts put forward by management or by others trying to be helpful. New ideas or concepts are put to death with question after question: “When we tried this a couple years ago, it didn’t work; why are we trying it now?” “That’s not our style.” “It will never work here – why would employees buy it; our investors don’t like this kind of thing; the boss will never go for it.” “It’s not a very smart way to go.” “It won’t work in our culture.” “I’ll work against it.”

**DO THE NUMBERS ADD UP?**

Even though my ratios add up to 121% of the employee base, this analysis works because the D³UV²’s victim driven negativity is at least twice as powerful, per person, at stopping or choking off progress as any positive concept could ever be. The D³UV²s are committed to getting nothing done and to seeing to it that no one else gets anything done either. D³UV²s question or challenge continuously.

**POSTULATE #1: Overcoming Organizational Deafness Is a Prerequisite to Effective Action**

The value of this new perspective is how it helps us better understand why organizations have so much trouble getting things done. Each employee group has a limited ability to hear what management is saying. In good times, each functional group has a hearing efficiency of only 1:3. They get every third word. Even those who work to live fail to hear every message correctly the first time. This is why management’s relentless quest for efficiency and effectiveness is always off the mark and why demands to get it right on the first day are nearly impossible to achieve. Even lifesaving messages have to be repeated.

When trouble is in the air, when change is on the horizon or coming into an organization, hearing efficiency is reduced to about every fifth or seventh word. Change creates fear, uncertainty, and doubt. When these are present, the listening efficiency can drop to 1:12 or worse. People who feel like victims don’t hear the facts. They can be moved only by appeals to their emotional state. This is why unconvinceables remain unconvinceables,
why the disaffected remain apart, and the disillusioned will not be reclaimed. Their ability to hear facts or useful information is blocked by their internal monologue and their constant public questioning.

**POSTULATE #2:**
The Most Important Employees, Those Who Work to Live, Require Recognition, Acknowledgement, and Very Little Else. (Avoid Blocking the Gate at Quitting Time.)

For communication to occur there must be someone on the correct frequency with his or her receiver turned on. For the WTL employees, it means answering two nagging questions they have about their work:

1. Does anyone know I’m here?
2. Am I doing something that is important or relevant to something that’s meaningful? Am I making a difference?

This is the group management wants to keep comfortable, peaceful, and healed. It’s these people who make the business run. They make ideas work. When management withholds information or simply doesn’t communicate, the WTLs become uncomfortable and begin to worry. The place they go for information is to the D³UV²s, rather than management.

The D³UV²s generally have only one major constituency, the WTLs.

When periods of uncertainty arise, if management is slow in answering the questions, the D³UV²s will combine with the WTLs. That means that up to three-quarters of the employee base is in turmoil and not ready to move forward in positive ways. These are optimal conditions for organizing activity, high turnover, increases in workplace accidents, violence, and quality issues. It is management’s fault.

**COROLLARY #1:**
Surveying employees to determine if they “like” where they work is not a useful measure. Even during change, employees honestly say that they like where they work. That’s because employees have learned how useless surveys are. Liking or not liking the work may or may not have anything to do with whether or not anything useful gets done, because employees have learned to game the survey process.

**POSTULATE #3:**
Real Time Communication Can Overcome Lack of Facts and a Poor Strategy.

Functional employees require very little information to stay focused on their jobs, but they need positively, useful, candid information promptly. They need answers to the questions.

Increasingly we’re recommending, for example, that even in good times company management meetings be held in real-time using teleconferences at least once a month. When problems occur we increase the frequency to two-to-four times per month. Modern technology allows hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people to attend these telemeetings. Just being included is a form of acknowledgement and recognition, which is so important to WTL employees at every level.

Hearing useful information from the boss, in real time, just as everyone else hears it, is a powerful tool for focus and clarification of goals. Real-time communication is the best way to control and disempower the D³UV²s. D³UV²s need delay and denial, negativity and emotional responses to keep up the confusion, fear, and uncertainty they cause.
POSTULATE #4:
The Only Effective Local Conduit for Communication With Employees Is Through a Source the Employees Respect and Recognize – Their Supervisor.

We reconfirm a well recognized but still poorly executed axiom: the immediate supervisor is the workers’ information source of choice – the most trusted, the most important and most powerful communication resource for individual employees – whether those employees are functional or dysfunctional. The public relations practitioner’s knowledge of the entire environment of the organization should drive the coaching, teaching, and development of supervisory communication skills. And, it may be useful to consider installing two functional supervisors within each working group in the organization – one who shares how the work is to be done and the other who both helps workers understand what’s going on in the business and collects information and worker questions to make sure that there is adequate feedback from within the organization so that questions are answered promptly.

BECOME AN EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIST

Employee communications strategies involve helping managers master the human dimension and find new ways to understand how employees approach their work. Remember the critical roles of the strategist:

1. Think aggressively.
2. Challenge assumptions.
3. Question cherished patterns.
4. Strive to master the human dimension.
5. Recommend useful, doable options.
6. Anticipate the unintended consequences of strategic action.

(For more information on this subject, contact the author by e-mail at jel@e911.com or explore his Web site at www.e911.com.)

Employee Communication Analysis

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>DUV² – Temporary</td>
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<tr>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Disengaged Work To Live (DWTW)</td>
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WTL: Work To Live  
DWTW: Disengaged Work To Live  
LTW: Live To Work  
DLTW: Dysfunctional Live To Work  
SAINNTS: Self-appointed IN or Near The Source  
DUV²: Disheartened, Disgruntled, Disoriented, Unconvinceable Victims needing a Victory
PROFILES IN FAILURE®: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES GUARANTEED TO PERPETUATE TROUBLE®

All too often when America’s largest companies and organizations fix mistakes and cope with disaster, embarrassment, and difficulty, a familiar pattern of initial behaviors occurs that Mom would not be proud of, at least at first.

There are few acts of corporate courage early on, especially at the highest levels. It’s more often confusion, contradiction, and avoidance—Profiles in Failure®: denial, victim confusion, testosterosis, arrogance, search for the guilty, fear of the media, and navel picking.

Organizations do have vulnerabilities and show-stopping problems—the landfill to be sited or closed; the labor agreement that’s getting tougher to negotiate; the sudden appearance of a new tax provision in an otherwise benign piece of legislation; a product recall; a kick-back scandal; saying too much; buying too much; selling too much; blowing something up; burning something down; allowing something to leak, seep, smoke, or stink—and critics who grow stronger with every mistake. The bigger the enterprise, the greater the potential for large-scale problems.

These ongoing vulnerabilities add a complicating dimension to trouble, career-defining moments, and Profiles in Failure® can lead to career-defining moments.

CAREER-DEFINING MOMENTS

What makes a career-defining event? Here are seven ingredients to the pattern:

1. Sudden high internal and/or public profile;
2. Intense stockholder and/or government interest;
3. Pointed, less gentle questions from the board of directors;
4. Well-known reporters in the lobby, at the gate, or landing in helicopters;
5. Sweat, fear, and sore guts from simply knowing it’s going to be bad;
6. The arrival of subpoenas, or seizures of corporate records or product; and
7. Spontaneous executive huddling and clumping.
HUDDLING AND CLUMPING

The boss and the "inner circle" huddle to explore and begin digesting the disruptive problem.

After a short time clumping occurs. Small clumps of executives break off from the main huddle. These clumps wander around questioning, arguing, and spreading a sense of mutual concern, sometimes even panic. They make urgent telephone calls to gather information, warn friends, and alert allies, but nothing substantial really happens.

PROFILES IN FAILURE®

When bad things happen there are seven corrosive behaviors organizations in trouble must plan against. Otherwise, they will quickly multitask themselves into long-term difficulty.

1. **Denial**: Refusal to accept that something bad has happened; that there may be victims or other direct effects that require prompt public acknowledgement. There is denial that it's really serious; denial that the media or public have any real stake or interest in whatever the problem happens to be; denial that it 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 over-react.” “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.”

The opposite of denial is candor.

2. **Victim Confusion**: Irritable reaction to reporters, employees, angry neighbors, 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 a good corporate citizen, 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:

- “There is risk in everything humans do.”

- “We've only known about this problem for the last two years.” “There aren't even any government standards to cover it. Until there are standards, how can we be expected to comply?”

- “If the government enforces this regulation, it 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 will suffer needlessly.”

The opposite of victim confusion is explanation of what actually happened.

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.

There is extraordinary negative energy inside the executive circle. That's what testosterosis really is ... an attack of adrenaline. Another definitive indicator, the use of military terminology – tactics, strategy, enemy, beachhead, attack, retreat and truce – builds a macho atmosphere. This command and control mentality sets the stage for predictable errors, omissions, and mistakes.

The opposite of testosterosis is sincerity.

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 bad precedents,” or, “There’ll be copycats,” or, “We’ll legitimize bad actions or people.”

It’s contempt for adversaries, sometimes even for victims, and almost always for the news media.

The opposite of arrogance is empathy.
5. **Search for the Guilty:** Shift blame away while digging into the organization to look for traitors, turncoats, troublemakers, those who push back, and the unconvinceables.

The news media and employees probably would be shocked to learn how much energy is diverted to the search for the individuals responsible and blaming others.

The opposite of searching for the guilty is searching for the truth.

6. **Fear of the Exposure:** As it becomes clear that the problem is at least partly real, the media and the victims begin asking, “What did you know, and when did you know it?” “What have you done, and when did you do it?”, along with other humiliating, embarrassing, and damaging questions such as, “What have you done and why,” “What do you refuse to do and why,” and “How many victims will it take to get action.”

There are no really good, comfortable answers because the organization’s leaders have stalled for so long.

The opposite of fear is engagement.

7. **Management by Whining Around:** When the decision is made to finally move forward, the organization talks only about its own pain, which makes victims, employees, neighbors, government, and the media even angrier.

The opposite of whining around is talking and walking around.

**AND THEN THERE’S THE PARKING PLACE PARADOX**

Life at home, in the community, and outside the office is guided by one set of rules and standards. Once in the office, behavior, language, style, and ethics are too often guided by a different set of rules and standards. In many cases it’s safe to say that our children, families, and friends wouldn’t recognize the decision-making process and standards at the office. They probably wouldn’t like them either. That’s because we left the behaviors and attitudes they recognize and like in the parking lot.

In fact, on issues that matter, the reversal of priorities between the community and business organizations is stunning (see Figure 1). It is this paradox in priorities that causes such a substantial disconnect between businesses and their publics when bad things are discovered or have already happened.
COMMUNITY VS CORPORATE PRIORITIES: A POWERFUL PARADOX

Figure 1

Community Priorities

| 1 | Health and Safety |
| 2 | Natural Environment |
| 3 | Social Environment |
| 4 | Cultural Environment |
| 5 | Technical Considerations |
| 6 | Financial Considerations |
| 7 | Economic Considerations |

Corporate Priorities

Behaviors, attitudes, and verbalized or written communication are how priorities are expressed. When these priorities create a paradox such as that shown in Figure 1, relationships between business organizations and the community are strained and drained. In fact, opposition is created. Harmony can be achieved only when these seven priorities become more mutually and appropriately structured. Hint: The community will successfully force the adoption of its priorities almost every time.

Figure 1 is just one example of many other problem-causing paradoxes that have a basis in communication and that cause or perpetuate trouble. Other paradoxes involve style, language, openness, and ethics.

Winston Churchill said it another way, many years ago. He said, "The thing I love most about America is that one can always count on Americans to do the right thing . . . after trying everything else first." It's an excellent and all too accurate revelation.

FAILURE REDUCTION

How does an organization quickly regain its credibility following a damaging situation? The steps are clear, positive, and without paradox: Candor, explanation, declaration, contrition, consultation, commitment, and restitution.

Respond with Profiles in Failure®, in any order, and I guarantee trouble, serious reputation problems, and brand damage. By the time you recover - if you do - there will be career-defining moments and perhaps a new team to replace you and yours.
STRATEGIC P.S.

What makes you essential is the self-evident value of your contribution rather than any documented justification for your existence.

(For more information on this subject, contact the author by e-mail at jel@e911.com or explore his Web site at www.e911.com.)
February 2012

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 Jell-O®.” 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.

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Recently, I found myself sitting in a corporate boardroom helping a large company and its newly named, soon-to-be CEO revise its strategic plan (something of an oxymoron, actually). When the discussion turned to doing a five-year plan, I raised the question of how long the last three CEOs had lasted. The average was 23 months. In fact, as a consultant, I had outlasted them all. I suggested to the recently elected CEO that it might be wise to develop a new strategic approach that more closely matched his probable tenure rather than to revise the current plan by establishing an optimistic set of principles and ideas that wouldn’t pass the straight-face test, no matter how sincerely they were developed. The meeting immediately got down to business. This is the memo I sent to him following that meeting.

TO: Our New CEO

RE: Your First 100 Days, 13.32 Weeks, 2400 Hours, 144,000 Minutes, 8,640,000 Seconds (and the next 1148 days after that)

There are important, urgent Executive Actions you need to take immediately to assure your success as CEO. Focusing on these actions will help you move through the first few months and speed your mental transition to chief executive (you aren't there yet… it takes a little time… you won’t “get it” down cold until you have the job… you'll see).

Your perspective will change. Your problems will be different. Just how successful you will be, in my judgment, will be determined in your first 100 days. It will take about nine 100-day periods before you know things are truly moving in the direction you expect, or that you will survive, perhaps for another 900 days. By that time, you will have survived longer than any of your predecessors, if that matters to you.

Before we get to those important actions, there are some interesting realities, some of which you are already experiencing. These are the expectations and realities that flow – with you – from your first day as CEO:

1. **Your Time is Short.** The typical career span of a CEO in the United States and Canada is 41 months, according to an average of calculations by several of the United States’ most reputable placement agencies. 41 months = 3.42 years (or 3 5/12 years); 10.25 quarters; 178.27 weeks; 1250 days; 30,000 hours; 1,796,991.62 minutes; 107,819,497 seconds. It seems like a lot, but time simply flies when you’re the Chief Executive.
2. **The Resistance is Formidable.** The prime directive of all cultures is to preserve and defend yesterday by detecting and preventing any signs of tomorrow from surviving. When there are doubts about our direction, hesitation or timidity, yesterday will win, every time.

3. **People Expect Action from Day One.** They expect, hope and fear that when you walk in the door you’ll begin making changes and making things happen.

4. **People Expect Change Even Though They Fear It.** Everyone is well aware of the tension during transition. Tension increases apprehension. Employees cannot understand why the people at the top of the mountain can’t work everything out. They actually believe there is a plan. You can't take the time to worry about this now because the clock is ticking on your own performance and on the future.

5. **Change is Continuous.** From your perspective and strategic view, the organization will change significantly about every 100 days during your first three years, even if everything goes smoothly. Change will occur more easily at first. Later, change gets harder and harder. The first 600 days present your principal opportunity to have an impact on corporate culture. Corporate culture can only be modified through significant fundamental change within the organization as a whole. Old habits never die; they need to be removed.

6. **Cultures are Modified in Only One Way.** Changing cultures is hard and takes time. I usually think in terms of forty quarters of time with persistence to start significant culture change progress. The recipe for culture modification has four crucial ingredients:
   - A strong, positive leader (a visionary).
   - Verbally driven management styles.
   - Goals everyone can understand, accept and achieve.
   - Constant direction, clarification, validation and repetition.

7. **Nothing You Learned Prior to Taking Over Will Seem to be of Great Value…** because it cannot be. You haven’t yet really begun to know the organization. Being totally in charge is totally different. No one will understand this but you.

8. **Speed Beats Smart Every Time.** The search for perfection before acting will kill any initiative that gets underway. You’re going to make mistakes in the early days; make them as soon as you can. Wherever possible, make next week’s mistakes this week, it will be better than if you waited.

   Each day you wait to make a decision or take an action, someone learns how to better defeat you.

9. **Change Often Causes Bad News For Many.** One thing we know about bad news is that it ripens badly, and begins to smell rather quickly. Get the garbage out as quickly as you can so you can deal with the true aftermath.

10. **Silence is a Toxic Strategy.** Failure to communicate quickly, compassionately and continuously will be create a vacuum that will be filled by anyone that has a passing thought. It is your destiny that’s being defined whenever you permit people to guess, speculate, or hypothesize.

    Control your own destiny, or someone else will shape it for you.

Now, let’s talk about the **success behaviors** you’ll need from the beginning. You must be prepared to:

1. **Act fast:** Implement a time-lined program of action the day you begin. If that is impossible, set incremental goals and guidelines that achieve rapid situation
assessment and the elements of a “move-forward” timeline within 72-to-96 hours of becoming CEO.

This approach will:

- **Test** those who could be your key advisors and future leaders.
- **Beat** the bureaucracy that’s probably the reason for past non-progress and is the repository of the “good old days.”
- **Scare** the nesters who think they have finally found a place to retire.
- **Subvert** the could of’s, would of’s and should of’s that torpedo progress and your success.

2. **Communicate immediately:** Plan a daily one-page newsletter or plainspoken e-mail or voice mail written by you. Winston Churchill did this throughout both World Wars I and II. He called them “Minutes.” Why not think about starting, “<Name>’s Minute” of your own? Churchill also wrote special orders called “Action This Day.” You might want to institute a similar approach for things you need done now.

Your “Minute” is a daily early morning 150 to 300 word message stressing three major topic areas: productivity, performance and items of interest. The first two sections are factual and relate to operational goals and objectives. The last section is your direct communications link to everyone in the organization. It’s talking directly each day to each employee about things that are on your mind and theirs.

**Caution:** If you start this, your people will like it a lot and hope that you continue it. Its purpose is clear: it is anti-rumor, anti-corporate politics, anti-counterrevolution within the organization; it is pro-progress, pro-organizational objective setting; it is pro-success, pro-personal recognition – yours and theirs – and says:

- We will talk.
- We will tell the truth.
- I will listen.
- What I do is your business too.
- There will be no “b.s.” between us.
- We will continuously recognize achievement and achievers.
- Every question will be answered.

3. **Walk:** The land of the chief executive is full of wanna-be CEOs, who dwell most of the time in their own silos. Get out and talk to the real people who punch clocks and who move the product. Eat, talk and work with employees. This means dozens to hundreds of employees seeing you, talking to you, understanding your goals and objectives directly and asking questions of you.

It sends powerful messages to supervisors and managers that they too must communicate accurately, effectively, promptly, verbally and in real time. When employees have an opportunity to speak with you directly about concerns, issues, or fears, it’s very much like the commander visiting his troops in the field. It’s a chance to personify your leadership and vision, to rally and motivate, and be memorable. All are concepts to get you to tomorrow.

Shake their hands; be with them. You are going to have to change some jobs and take other jobs away. Better make it as pleasant and quick as possible. Enemies accumulate.

4. **Manage the self-appointed:** The greatest disasters will be the result of the work of those who think they know you best and who try to help you most. After all, because they know you so well, they are the only ones who can shoot you down – and they will. They might not mean to … but they will. It can be death by question or by negative interpretation. Stay focused on your goals, communicate, and you will manage the self-appointed, self-anointed.
5. **Be the boss:** Eight out of 10 decisions you make will disappoint, anger or offend some individual or group. Welcome to life at the top. Be satisfied with the good things you will get to do and accomplish. They are going to be spectacular. Stay focused. Be positive. Lead verbally.

6. **Talk and act in real time:** Do company-wide live teleconferences, which allow employees and managers to hear from you, directly and in real time, and to ask questions and hear you provide on-the-spot answers. Recognize individual performance, achievement, passion and enthusiasm through brief handwritten notes. When it comes to recognition, e-mail is very unsatisfactory and perhaps even insulting. Take the time to write little notes to people. They will tell their moms, remember forever, and will almost never become your enemy.

7. **Managers will manage:** Bureaucrats will try to count, measure and restore the past. They are the last to know that the goals have changed. They figure it out when they find out. Then, they mindlessly manage without new direction and new orders to follow.

8. **Leadership is primarily a verbal skill:** Your job is to go out to the horizon, look over the edge, then come back and tell us all where we’re going and show us how to get there in 150 words or less. The bean counters can’t do this, the price-cutters and slick marketers can’t do this, neither can the management consultants...only you can do it by telling and showing us.

9. **The world moves at verbal speed:** Your verbal speed. No matter how much is written, no matter how flashy the slides shows and PowerPoints, the organization will move forward at about 150 words per minute (the verbal speed of English-speaking cultures). Plans not verbalized, taught and retaught will fail.

10. **Repeat yourself:** More than half of the people in your organization aren’t listening at any given time. The distracted and the disengaged need to be told perhaps as many as 10 times before they begin to realize that you really do require them to change.

11. **Constantly talk about what you expect:** Use examples, use incentives, recognition and repetition.

12. **Build followership:** The most powerful way you build the followers you need is to recognize people personally, publicly and frequently.

   There are some important external actions you need to orchestrate early on as well:

1. **Get local help:** Find a peer, fellow CEO or senior level counselor of whom you can ask those embarrassing and sometimes silly questions all new CEOs have. If it’s a consultant, keep their work separate from other agency-like things you will do in sales, marketing and merchandising. Find someone who can keep his or her mouth shut and who will be completely loyal to you.

2. **Be visible in the community and the countryside:** Even though you may be uncomfortable with a reasonably high profile, **this is expected of you.** These times are opportunities to share your vision, draw your employees toward the goals you've selected, and to build a base of support for those times when things won't go well and there surely will be some of those. The most powerful agent of change is you. You are the chief strategist, cheerleader and score keeper.

3. **Change expectations:** Exercise the discipline of the strategist. Effective strategies are time-sensitive, brief, stated positively, understandable and clearly achievable. If you can combine your goals with your strategies, your odds of success
go up dramatically. Two of the best models are:

- **Jack Welch** rebuilt GE with: Be #1 in your category, or #2 going for #1, or be preparing an exit strategy for leaving GE.

- **FedEx** – Absolutely, positively overnight.

Teach and live the ingredients of leadership:

1. **Be and stay positive:** Avoid the use of negative language which causes mostly bad news. Remember how badly bad news ripens.

2. **Be constructive:** Insist on useful, positive suggestions rather than mindless, negative criticism, questions and complaints.

3. **Be prompt:** Speed beats smart on the quest for perfection every time. There is simply no evidence that speeding up decision-making causes any more errors than decisions that are delayed by timidity, hesitation, or the search for the perfect solution. Do it now, ask it now, fix it now, challenge it now and change it now.

4. **Be outcome focused:** Work toward tomorrow rather than yesterday. Everyone owns the past in ways that cannot be overcome. As Stephen Covey would say, plan with the end in mind and you’ll move forward with twice the velocity.

5. **Be reflective:** If you must examine the past, look only for those lessons that will usefully inform future actions and decisions.

6. **Be pragmatic:** Move the organization toward those things that can actually happen. Dreamy, foggy, unintelligible goals are as detrimental as turgid, impersonal, mindless mission, vision and values approaches. Do what people can understand, then stretch their imagination.

7. **Be relentlessly committed to positive incremental personal and organizational improvement, every single day.**

   Increments accumulate and form the foundation for luck and success.

   Build new leaders who can move the organization where you need it to go because however good you are, the company is still run every day by the people who show up to do their jobs, each mostly wanting to go home on time.

   You’ll find me available 24/7 by fax, phone, e-mail, or texting.

With respect, admiration, hopefulness and warm regards,

James E. Lukaszewski, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

* For more information on this and other crisis communication management topics, visit the author’s Website at [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com).
DISCUSSION OUTLINE

How to Develop the Mindset of a Strategist:
Getting to the Table Earlier and With More Personal Power

PRSA Seminar
Thursday, November 29, 2012

If those who listened to this program with you would like to have a follow-up discussion, here are some questions to begin the conversation:

1. What do you know now that you didn’t know when the program began?
2. What’s the most important concept or idea you learned from this program?
3. What questions has the presentation raised for which you need to find answers?
4. What key skills, ideas, or knowledge did this program confirm for you?
5. Based on what you learned and heard today, what is the first thing you’re going to do when you return to your office?
6. What’s the second thing you’re going to do?
A Book for Everyone Who Wants to Tell the Boss 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.

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JAMES E. LUKASZEWSKI, ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA

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 Western Hemisphere, 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 issues. He counsels companies 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 Relations’ important Journals and serial Publications. His most recent book, Why Should the Boss Listen to You?, was published by Jossey-Bass in 2008.


An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the 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 since 1987.

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 26 editions of various Marquis Who’s Who in America (including the 2013, 67th edition), The World (including 2012, 30th 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.” Googling James E. Lukaszewski yields over 32,000 entries.

(09-21-12 TLG/RPR)