

# Media Masters

## Crisis Training for the Spotlight

October 13, 2016

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH  
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# Overview

- Crisis Fundamentals
- Crisis Readiness
- Communicating in a Crisis
- Leveraging Social Media
- Media Interviews
- Crisis Recovery



# Crisis Fundamentals

# Defining a Crisis

A situation that threatens your:

- Future image
- Operations
- Customer Base
- Financial Health
- Community Standing
- Long-term Performance
- Executive Team



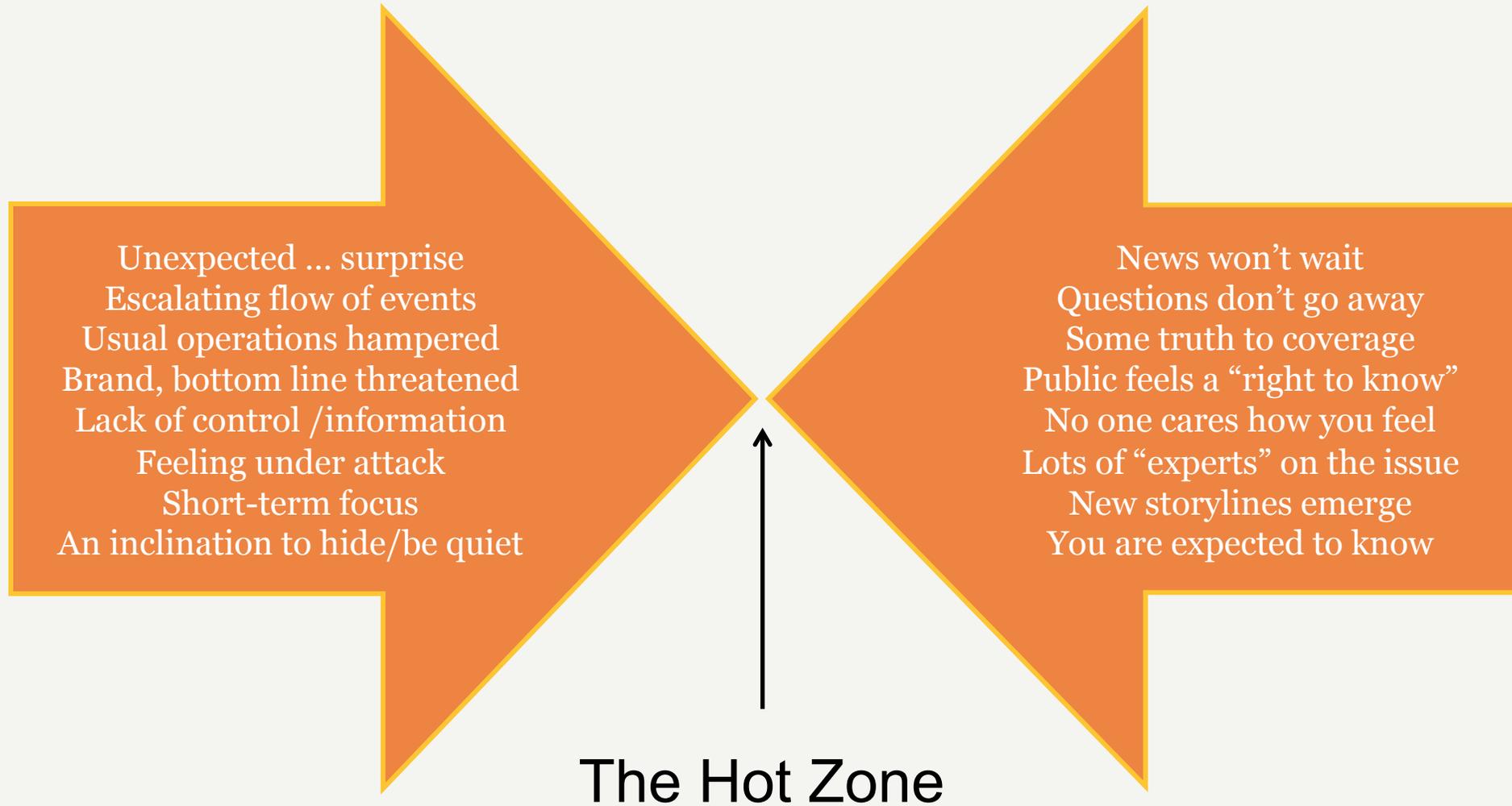
# Crisis Categories

- Criminal
  - Ex: abuse, assault
- Accidents
  - Ex: injury, fatality
- Natural Disasters
- Staff, Labor
  - Ex: disgruntled employee
- Financial
  - Ex: organizational restructuring, budget
- Cultural
  - Ex: perceived issues with free speech, discrimination

# Crisis Levels

- **Level 1 – Minimally Intense**
  - Ex: angry parent, program cancellation
- **Level 2 – Moderately Intense**
  - Ex: medical evacuation, transportation accident
- **Level 3 – Seriously Intense**
  - Ex: assault, criminal investigation
- **Level 4 – Highly Intense**
  - Ex: Major earthquake, fatality/fatalities, missing person/s

# The Hot Zone



# What is news?



# What Makes News?

## Timing

The word *news* means exactly that - things which are *new*.

## Significance

The number of people affected by the story is important.

## Proximity

The closer the story to home, the more newsworthy it is.

## Prominence

Famous people/known brands tend to get more coverage, and controversy will elevate an issue, person or brand in the newsroom.

## Human Interest Pieces

Appeals to emotion, but unless there are elements of the above, it remains “evergreen” and may be put on the “back burner.”

# Media Landscape



The New York Times



BuzzFeedNEWS



GANNETT



San Francisco Chronicle



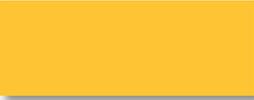


# Crisis Readiness

# Essential Elements of Crisis Readiness

- Crisis communications plan
  - Scenario planning
  - Crisis Response Fast Pack
- Training and simulation
  - Media training
  - Table-top drills
- Media and digital/social monitoring
  - More than Google
  - Social media listening
- Periodic review/audit





# Communicating in a Crisis

# Why Talk to the Media?

- Obligation to keep affected audiences informed if necessary
- Based on likeliness of media story
- Pre-empt adversaries
- Set the record straight
- Opportunity to tell your side of story; don't allow others to tell your story for you

# Long-term Goals

- Preserve or enhance reputation of your organization
- Maintain normal operations
- Establish/maintain working relationship with media
- Protect online reputation

# “No Comment” – the Wrong Message

- We’re looking into the situation and I will provide you with an update when more information is available.
- At this point, we are urgently trying to gather information about what happened. I will inform you of new developments as soon as possible.
- We are aware of this situation, and we’re doing everything we can to help those involved determine the facts. I will provide further information shortly.



# Guidelines for prioritizing CRISIS communications during the first 48 minutes



## External Communication

Remind staff about news media & social media policies



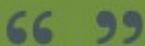
Who is authorized to serve as spokesperson/s?  
Who is authorized to post on official social media channels?

Equip front-line teams to handle the first wave of inquiries



Website  
Social media  
Customer service/hotline/front office

Share information with media



Develop statement with known facts and provide timely updates as the situation unfolds

## Priority

Is anyone's safety at risk? Immediately activate the emergency notification system.



**Provide key facts:** What is happening? What are the relevant known facts?



**Define the audience:** Who is directly affected? Who is in a position to help?



**Focus on action:** What should people do to reduce/eliminate risk and help victims, law enforcement, emergency personnel?



**Provide a timeline:** When can people expect the next update?



**Identify official sources:** Where can people turn to for the most accurate and current information?

## Internal Communication

Activate Crisis Communications Team



Designate internal and external spokesperson/s



Establish communications control center



Consider alerting outside counsel:  
Legal  
Public Relations  
Industry alliances, certifying agencies  
Subject matter experts/consultants



# Leveraging Social Media

# Social Media Goals

Present your  
perspective

Address  
concerns

Correct  
misinformation

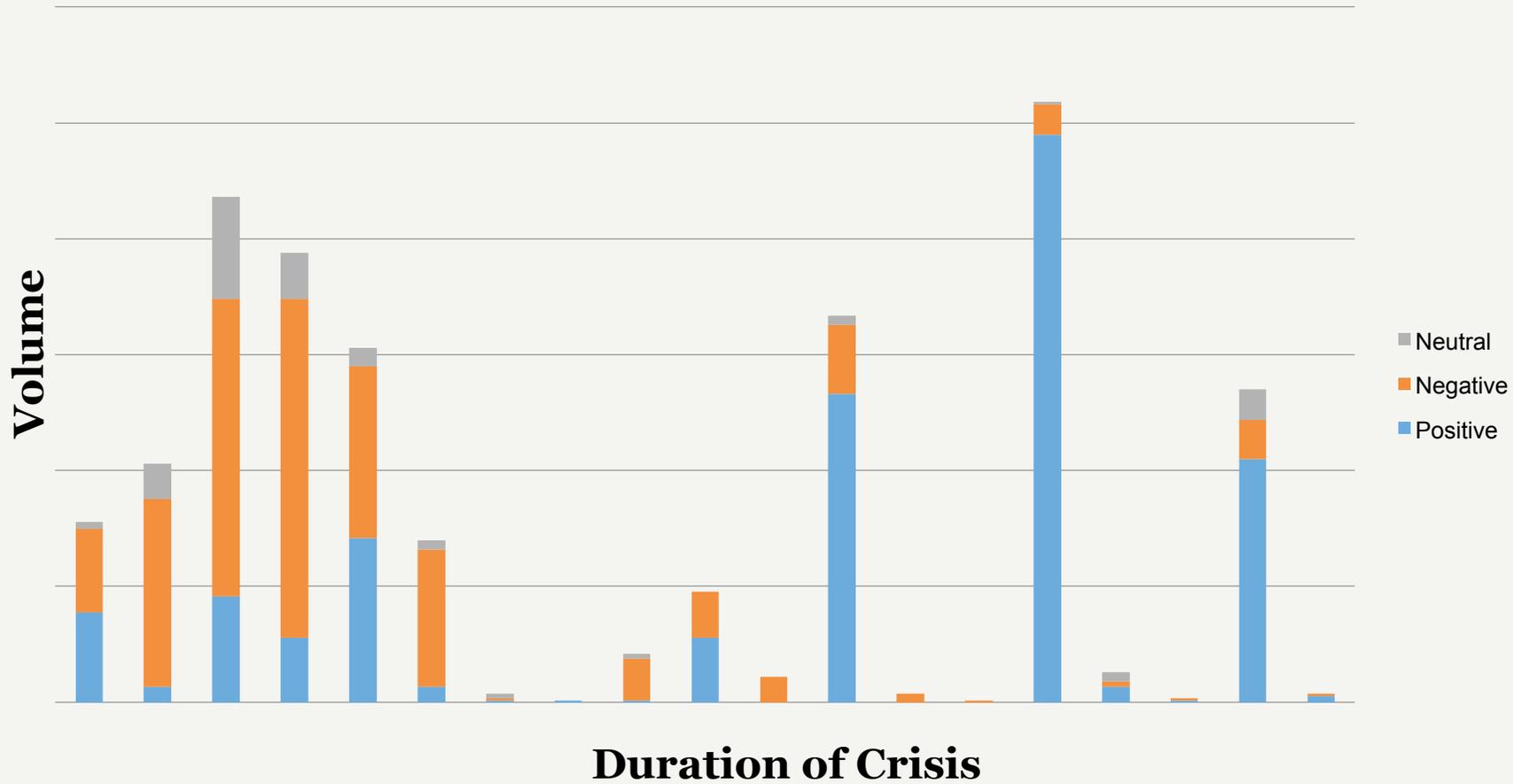
Show you are  
listening

Adjust strategy,  
messaging

# Social Media Listening



## Tonality of Social Media Posts



# Response Guidelines

## Who

- Respond to genuine concerns
- Don't feed the trolls

## What

- Answer the big questions
- Consistent messages across all platforms

## Where/How

- Respond via same method
- Drive to main source

## When

- Act in real time to the greatest extent possible
- Recognize when the crisis is over

# Preparing for the Interview



# Target Audiences

- Students
- Family members
- Staff, volunteers
- Regulatory agencies, law enforcement
- Program partners, stakeholders
- Potential enrollees, general public

# Broadcast is More Than Words

## Body Language

- Keep good posture ... don't slouch
- Move hands naturally
- Look the reporter in the eye

## Tone

- Convey confidence as the expert
- Don't react with sarcasm
- Think about a positive demeanor (if appropriate)

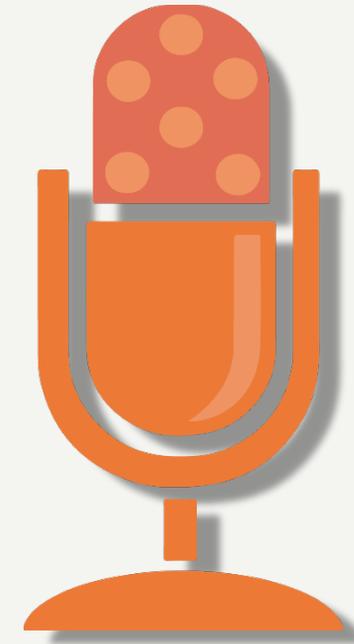
## Looking the Part

- No sunglasses
- No hats
- No suits

# Prepare and Rehearse

- Develop key messages
- Anticipate tough questions
- Know your boundaries
- Practice, practice, practice!

# Successful Interview Techniques



# Key Message

- Truth
- States your position concisely
- Sounds like a human being, not like a bureaucrat
- Is backed up by evidence
- Is a point you most want to leave with your audience

# Communicating the Message

## Interview Do's:

- Do listen carefully to the entire question
- Do remember you're the expert
- Do tell the truth
- Do correct mistakes on the spot
- Do show enthusiasm
- Do remember your relationship with the reporter



# Communicating the Message

## Interview Don'ts:

- Don't expect questions in advance
- Don't ramble
- Don't say "no comment"
- Don't go off the record
- Don't ask to review or edit the story
- Don't be passive



# Media Interview Tips and Tricks

- Stick to Key Messages
- Block and Bridge
- Flag
- Headline
- Be Aware of Tricky Questions
- Managing Quotes
- Personalize Message
- Use Statistics Wisely

# Blocking and Bridging

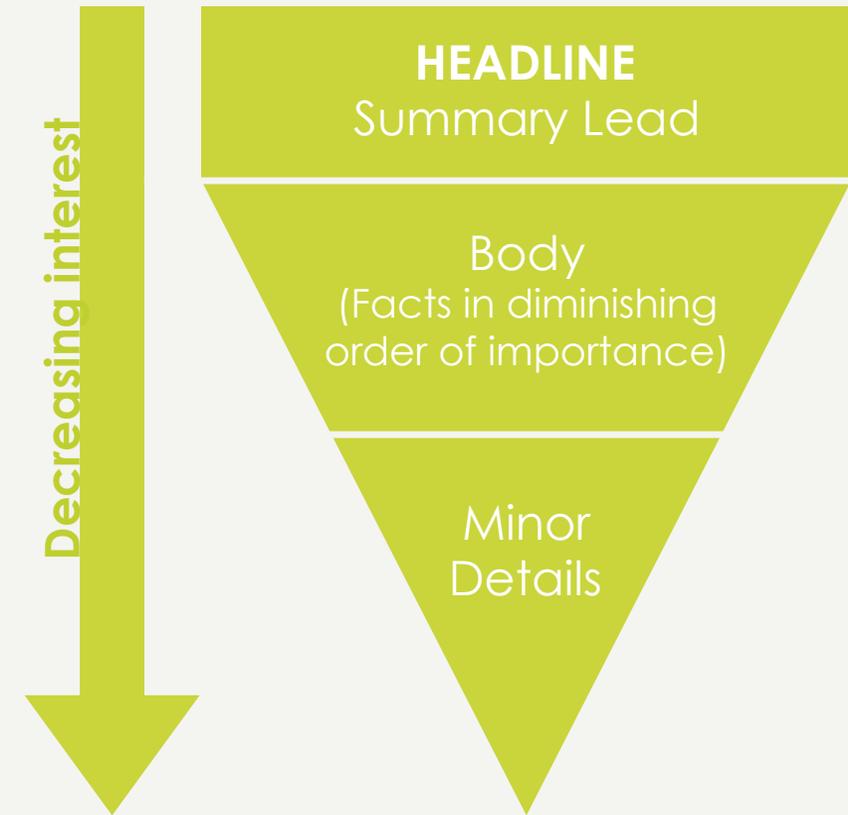
- “Keep in mind that ...”
- “Let me add ...”
- “It’s our policy not to discuss \_\_\_\_\_. But what I can tell you is ...”
- “Perhaps another way to look at it is ...”
- “That’s not the case. In fact, ...”

# Flagging

- “The key thing to remember is ...”
- “The most important issues for us are ...”
- “It really boils down to ...”
- “The key is ...”
- “The bottom line is ...”

# Headlining

- Give “headline” responses – clear and concise
- Then provide details and supporting points
- Think “inverted pyramid”



# Interview Dynamics

$$Q = A$$

$$Q = A$$

$$Q = A$$

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$$Q = A + \text{bridge to Message 1}$$

$$Q \text{ about Message 1} = A + \text{Message 2}$$

$$Q \text{ about Message 2} = A + \text{Message 3}$$

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# Tricky Questions

- Hypothetical
- A or B dilemma or multiple choice
- Cast-iron guarantee
- False premise
- Leading
- Irrelevant

# Managing Quotes

## Do's:

- Keep it simple
- Speak in complete sentences/thoughts
- “Flag” key points
- Create images with your words
- Speak in easily understandable terms – avoid jargon



# Managing Quotes

## Don'ts:

- Don't feel compelled to fill the silence
- Don't be so fixated by a question that you forget your own message
- Don't "fake" an answer if you don't know it
- Don't speculate
- Don't allow yourself to be provoked
- Don't repeat a negative



# Personalizing Your Message

- Experience makes your point “real”
- “I have found ...”
- “When I tried this ...”
- “I saw for myself ...”
- “In my own family ...”

# Media Training Exercise

# Exercise

A reporter from *The Salt Lake Tribune* is set to interview you about the following scenario.

A group of eight high school students were on their way to an overnight backpacking trip along the West Rim Trail of Zion National Park, about a five-hour drive south of our current location, when they were involved in an accident. The excursion was organized by your group, Salt Lake Outdoor Adventures. One of your staff members was the team leader and driver of the lone vehicle, a 2011 GMC Savana passenger van. One student, 16-year-old Meghan Wallace, suffered critical injuries and died at Beaver Valley Hospital. Four other students suffered minor injuries. The other staff member was asleep at the time of the crash. The police department is investigating. The driver told police that the brakes malfunctioned, which caused the vehicle to veer off-road and into a ditch. The family of the deceased student has been informed. All emergency contacts have been made aware of the situation. The trip was cancelled. Salt Lake Outdoor Adventures has not had another vehicular crash in the last three years, and it has never had a fatality.



# Crisis Recovery

# Move Forward

- Shift conversation to the future
  - Take responsibility, if appropriate
  - What improvements did you make to your program/organization as a result of this crisis?
    - New/enhanced training, protocols, accreditation
    - Change in leadership
    - Internal improvements (for internal audiences)
- Rebuild reputation
  - Share positive news
  - Demonstrate leadership

# Thank You

Remember:

A crisis does not end until you learn from it.

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