

January 1989

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: Causes and Sources for News Story Errors

Having trained thousands of executives for thousands of interviews and having participated in, or been the subject of, hundreds of interviews, I've tried to identify the behaviors that cause news story errors. Experience demonstrates that there are mistakes on both sides.

Here is a handy reference list of causes of news story errors:

WE CAUSE ERRORS BY:

- Misquoting our own facts
- Getting irritated with reporters
- Giving old information
- Spilling our guts
- Saying too much
- Saying too little
- Being too technical
- Giving fuzzy answers
- Making irrelevant comments
- Being inaccessible
- Using "No comment"
- Leaking information
- Speculation
- Speaking without key messages
- Going beyond our knowledge
- Going beyond the reporter's knowledge

THE MEDIA CAUSE ERRORS BY:

- Misquoting
- Leaping to conclusions
- Creating inappropriate headlines
- Not seeking responses
- Moving too quickly
- Not controlling speculation
- Using unauthorized sources
- Finding internal leaks
- Using outside experts
- Using references from competition or adversaries
- Using unverified information (usually rumors)
- Using old file information

As business people we can decrease news story errors by modifying our own behavior and learning how to effectively anticipate reporters' errors. Eradicating our sources of error takes training. If we also take more responsibility for communicating our messages and ideas in interviews, instead of relying on the reporter to do so, we will be even less subject to bad news

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