

April / May / June 2004

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, APR, Fellow PRSA* Chairman

RE: Contrast Analysis: A Tool for Strategists to Get Management's Attention

We lose management's attention when we fail to add sufficient insight, interpretation, or forecast power to our advice. Contrast analysis is a simple, direct technique engaging those you counsel and advise in working through issues and questions. Pick a topic, issue, or question. List the current assumptions about that topic on the left-hand side, then list the counter facts or realities on the right-hand side. Discuss the differences; make better decisions. Here's an example.

### **Plant Expansion: Convincing the Public to Support a Big Project**

#### **Our Assumptions: If We Build It . . .**

1. New jobs
  - Permanent
  - Temporary
2. Economic impact
3. Charitable contributions
4. Taxes paid
5. Better land use

#### **The Community's Realities: If We Let You Build It . . .**

- Good jobs already taken by strangers, relatives, and applicants from other areas.
- Construction jobs: The steel will be hung by Native American specialists from Arizona.
- The cement work will be done by a special team from Alberta.
- The only "real" jobs available initially will be low-wage, menial jobs.
- Property taxes will be distorted as wealthy new employees (strangers) move into town and buy property (perhaps making it impossible for my children to live in the same town).
- Strangers will take over and reshape key institutions in town because of their financial and contributory clout.
- Can't pay enough to offset the noise, dust, traffic, and strangers.
- The old land use was just fine and valuable land will be taken for a use we had no choice in accepting.

This approach can drive communication and decision making away from assumptions toward realities – probably a good thing. Communicating only about assumptions causes community anger, resistance, and the likelihood of defeat. Contrast analysis triggers meaningful, strategic conversations with management.

If you'd like more information or equally interesting views, ideas, and concepts, visit the author's Web site at [www.e911.com](http://www.e911.com).

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