

July 2000

TO: Executive Addressed

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

RE: Counteracting the Reporter's Most Powerful Weapon - Color Words

The ingredient that makes reporter questions so powerful and feared is the use of what I call "color words." These are the words that make your stomach turn to cream cheese and slowly seep down into your shoes. They emotionalize, sensationalize, or otherwise energize reporter questions.

Here's a sampling of commonly used gut-twisting, emotional color words taken from news interviews. Just reading them out loud can give you the willies . . .

Afraid	Brainwashed	Deteriorate	Fearful	Mad	Rip-off	Tense
Alarmed	Bungled	Despicable	Fight	Mangled	Rotten	Terrified
Alleged	Buried	Destroy	Foolish	Mangy	Sabotage	Terror-stricken
Anger	Catastrophic	Destructive	Frightened	Manipulate	Sad	Terrorized
Angry	Collusion	Disappointed	Frustrating	Mean	Sarcastic	Threatened
Anguish	Conceal	Disarray	Furious	Meek	Scared	Toxic
Antagonize	Confuse	Discontented	Gratuitous	Messy	Scum	Tragic
Anxious	Contempt	Discouraged	Greed	Miserable	Self-pity	Traitor
Apathetic	Corrosive	Disgusted	Guilty	Nag	Selfish	Tumultuous
Appalled	Cover-up	Distorted	Harassed	Negligent	Shame	Ugly
Apprehensive	Cringe	Disturbed	Hopeless	Out-of-touch	Shameful	Unbelievable
Argue	Critical	Doubt	Hostile	Overwhelmed	Shatter	Underhanded
Ashamed	Crooked	Dumb	Humiliated	Outrageous	Sick	Undermine
Assassinate	Damaging	Ecotage	Hurt	Panicky	Silly	Uneasy
Attack	Danger	Embarrassed	Ignorant	Petrified	Skunk	

Bad	Deadly	Embattled	Immature	Pitiful	Slash	Unhappy
Betrayed	Defeated	Endanger	Incompetent	Poisonous	Stampede	Unsure
Blame	Defective	Enraged	Inept	Profiteering	Struggle	Weird
Blasted	Demean	Excessive	Investigate	Regret	Stupid	Worried
Bombs	Deny	Exposed	Inappropriate	Repudiate	Surrender	
Bored	Despair	Face-saving	Irritated	Resentful	Tampering	
Botched	Desperation	Failure	Litigate	Resigned	Tarnish	

Stay in control. Respond using positive, declarative answers. Stop taking reporter questions personally. They are just questions. In many cases, the questions reporters ask are never printed or aired. Focus on your messages, your answers, and be responsive to the concerns of the audiences you're trying to reach.

If you'd like a copy of, "The Believability Index for Reporters and News Stories," an interesting news story analysis technique, please mail or fax a request on your letterhead to The Lukaszewski Group Inc., Ten Bank Street, Suite 530, White Plains, NY 10606, (914) 681-0047-Facsimile; or E-mail us at tlg@e911.com. Be sure to visit our Web site at www.e911.com.

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