

August/September 1987

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: Dealing With Confrontation: Important Reminders

Effectively dealing with crises caused by confrontation involves both preparation and recognition of behavior patterns. It requires preparing answers for the toughest possible questions as well as those questions you hope reporters will ask. Recognize common behavior factors and prepare for confrontation:

- *You cannot "win" in confrontations*, especially with protest groups. However, if you are prepared, confrontation can be an opportunity to do some effective and critical communicating. Only the media win from confrontation.
- *Confrontations precede negotiations*. So, prepare your own list of issues, ideas, questions, and answers before committing to confront or negotiate. Decide what you will or will not agree to do. Set group rules. Get there early. Don't work from their list of demands.
- *Conduct your own research*. Before you negotiate, find out who you're meeting and their goals, objectives, past practices, attitudes, and behavior.
- *Confront in comfort*. Standing in front of 200 outraged employees may please the news cameras, but is not conducive to effective negotiation. Pick neutral ground. Allow for media coverage, but insist on private places where you can think, talk, and negotiate.
- *Effective demonstrations are well rehearsed*. You should rehearse your own tactics as well.
- *Remember who the real audiences are* -- not the media, not necessarily even the group involved, but everyone who has dealings with your organization, especially your employees. Gear your messages to them first.

Perhaps the most fascinating book on the topic of confrontation is *Rules for Radicals*, copyright © 1971 by Saul D. Alinsky, Vintage Books, Division of Random House, New York. If you face confrontation, your confronters have undoubtedly studied and use Alinsky's methods.

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