

May/June 1988

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: Executive Attitudes About the Media

Business people are suspicious of reporters. They seem to have many strong doubts about their ability to succeed in the news interview and with reporters.

These attitudes are traps -- traps that lie in wait for the most well- intentioned corporate communicator.

Over the last 15 years I have collected and studied most of the more common business attitudes. In summary, more than 5,000 U.S. and international executives feel the media:

- Are ignorant
- Are intimidating
- Are inaccurate
- Sensationalize
- Do only bad news
- Oversimplify
- Are anti-business
- Don't do their homework
- Don't follow up
- Are sometimes unpatriotic
- Don't use common sense
- Invade people's privacy
- Intentionally hurt people
- Never repair the damage they do
- Report events differently than other eyewitnesses.

Executives must be trained to be aware of these powerful attitudes, attitudes that shape their interaction with the media. Such preconceptions often prohibit an effective interchange. Successful media interviews require executives to be confident (by being prepared), in control (primarily through setting ground rules), effective (by having messages ready), and comfortable (through rehearsal and coaching). Successful news interviews can eventually modify negative executive attitudes about the media and the media's role in society.

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