

October/November/December 1990

TO: Executive Addressed

FR: James E. Lukaszewski, APR Chairman

RE: Lukaszewski's Eleven Axioms of Crisis Survival

Managing emergencies, crises, and disasters successfully means recognizing the patterns of success, failure, and defeat. Understanding these patterns enables us to coach and prepare management's actions, emotions, and expectations before and during emergency situations. Here's what I've learned.

1. Defeat is almost always the work of co-workers, associates, well-meaning friends, or dysfunction in your organization. Neither the media, your opponents, nor the government know enough to defeat you.
2. Keeping the issues and focus tight and small will help you solve your problems and move forward. Your "industry," outsiders or the media cannot solve your problems (they don't care), nor can you solve theirs. You must solve your own.
3. Disasters and problems rarely kill products or companies unless you let them. It is your own negative communication and attitude that cause tough questions, bad stories, and real damage.
4. Colorful and memorable language create headlines that are impossible to live down.
5. Twenty-five percent of your resources and fifty percent of your energy during emergencies go toward fixing yesterday's mistakes.
6. Positive, aggressive, assertive communication limits follow-up questions, focuses on the most important aspects of the problem, and moves the entire process forward to resolution despite a negative environment, or an antagonistic news media. Actions speak louder than words.
7. There is no question you can be asked about your situation that will surprise you. You may get irritated because a really tough or touchy subject is raised, but you aren't surprised. Questions are your opportunities to get your messages out.
8. Preparation, rehearsal, and a certain amount of luck will keep you going and help you win.
9. Luck is limited.
10. The general public does not care about your problems until you make them care.
 - o Fifty percent of the general public have no reason to care;
 - o Twenty-five percent of the general public probably have troubles worse than yours, from their perspective, anyway; and
 - o If you get the attention of those remaining, they are probably glad you have the trouble you have.
11. Leadership that shows compassion and community sensitivity moves companies to victory and out of harm's way. Timidity, hesitation, and arrogance bring defeat. Keep the pressure on to win.

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