

In the rough-and-tumble world of corporate America, senior PR execs should consider themselves fortunate if they can win that proverbial seat at the table. But with many CEOs still skeptical as to PR's inherent value, communication execs often have a tough time keeping their seats. Gaining media exposure is one thing, but the real hook for PR managers is to show C-level executives that you can speak — without hesitation — their language of dollars and cents. Speaking CEOs' language is probably not something that was taught to you in communications courses but the current climate (and jobless economic recovery) demands that PR execs change their verbiage when it comes to dealing with the boss. For some pointers, *PR NEWS* asked contributing editor and management consultant James Lukaszewski to weigh in on this growing aspect of corporate communications.

At a recent meeting I attended where CEOs were presenting their management strategies for the coming decade, one CEO made a particularly candid observation. She said, "What I need from those around me are ideas that can make money, keep money, or save money...otherwise they're wasting my time."

The question for the communicator is, "Where does what I do fit into the spectrum of finding, keeping, or saving revenue?" Management's expectations of us:

- Valuable, useful, applicable advice beyond what they already know
- Well-timed, truly significant insights (the ability to distill wisdom and useful conclusions from contrasting - even seemingly unrelated - information and facts)
- Advance warning plus options for solving, or at least managing trouble or opportunity, and the unintended consequences both often bring
- Information and intelligence about what's going to happen (something the news media can never provide since news is always about yesterday)
- Supporting evidence, usually through behavior of their peers

- Your instincts and gut feelings, the real lessons of your experience

Diana Fusco, of Cleveland, told the story (at a **PRSA Counselors Academy** meeting) of how her agency and her practice were dramatically changed when acquired by a regional management consulting firm. She described the impact on her as a practitioner and how her business thinking and strategy were transformed. The first thing that changed was the vocabulary. The revised list of client service descriptions for her new Management Communications and Strategic Communication Counsel function speak for themselves:

- Customer/loyalty management
- Strategic planning
- Customer-centered reengineering
- Executive and management development
- Staff development
- Team/employee loyalty building
- Organizational operation review and analysis
- Corporate marketing and communication

- Crisis consulting
- Issue/exposure forecasting

Notice the word, "communication" appears in the list only once. This is an operationally oriented presentation of communication concepts. If you want the attention of those who run the business or organization, and who are almost totally operationally focused, learn to speak their language and make recommendations within their frame of reference.

PR vocabulary, techniques, and approaches are well known to management. Use them and you're wasting top management's time. My advice: learn to talk like a manager, act like a manager, and focus on the management context of issues. This is the way you make, keep, or save money. Believe me, start doing this and you'll be invited back to meetings time and again for your advice.