

DUMB, DOPEY, DAMAGING STRATEGIES: ATTACK THE PRESS

It's a pity I have but four pages to cover this crucial topic. To best use your time, I'll demonstrate how to calculate the damage this approach can cause. I've selected two examples hoping that analyzing this approach will be valuable to communicators in dissuading the use of these techniques in favor of developing serious, sensible, and sincere strategies.

Recently I had a client, who was involved in national class-action litigation, tell a reporter that many of the victims had no concept of the right numbers or the real nature of their situation. The victims were "misguided," "mistaken," and "tools of a legal system that was killing America." This spokesperson, a very competent attorney, knew better but was just having a "lawyer's bad day." When he asked me about the impact of these statements (he was accurately quoted in the newspaper), I suggested three potential outcomes: First, perhaps another hundred victims will now join the class-action litigation, maybe even more; second, several months have probably been added to the resolution of the case (which will be settled and never get to trial); and third, several zeros have been added to the ultimate settlement cost.

My approach is to subject all statements, scripts, legal documents, and explanations to a three-step strategic communications analysis:

1. Negative language is removed.
2. Superfluous words, phrases, and unproductive language are aggressively removed.
3. The remaining remarks, writings, or comments are analyzed for the questions those comments generate so that the comments can be revised to answer questions and improve the power of the information presented.

Bad news, bad behavior, and bad language have a tendency to cause very serious and expensive problems. **Simple, sensitive, sensible, sincere, and positive language is the strategy to choose when you write or speak, even if you're dealing with your greatest adversary.** The power to control, manage, win, and avoid career-defining moments is the approach taken by honorable, trustworthy, and credible organizations interested in preserving their reputation, credibility, and trustworthiness.



PRODUCT DETAILS

Newsletter: 4 pages
Language: English
Price: \$5.00 U.S.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James E. Lukaszewski (loo-ka-SHEV-skee) advises, coaches, and counsels the men and women who run very large corporations and organizations. He is an expert in managing and counteracting tough, touchy, sensitive corporate communications issues. The fastest growing portion of his practice involves civil and criminal litigation. He is one of the few who can and truly does coach CEOs.

He is a prolific author (several books, hundreds of articles), lecturer (corporate, college and university), coach, and counselor. He is quoted in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Miami Herald*, the *Harvard Business Review*, and industry trade journals. He is a columnist, advisor, or editor for almost every major public relations periodical. His 1992 book, *Influencing Public Attitudes: Strategies that Reduce the Media's Power*, remains a classic work in the field of direct communication. He is an internationally recognized speaker on crisis management, ethics, media relations, public affairs, and reputation preservation and restoration. Visiting his Web site, www.e911.com, is like attending the University of Crisis Management.

An accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (ABC) and the Public Relations Society of America (APR), Mr. Lukaszewski is a member of the PRSA's College of Fellows (Fellow PRSA) and Board of Ethics & Professional Standards. He served as a crisis communications advisor to the International Disaster Advisory Committee, Agency for International Development, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance from 1989 to 1992, and is a civilian advisor to several other federal agencies. He lectures annually at the U.S. Marine Corp's East Coast Commander's Media Training Symposium and was the second recipient of its Drew Middleton Award. He is the recipient of both Ball State University's 2004 National Public Relations Achievement Award and the 2004 Patrick Jackson Award for Distinguished Service to PRSA, and is among the winners of the 2005 *PR News* Lifetime Achievement Award. His name appeared in *Corporate Legal Times* as one of "28 Experts to Call When All Hell Breaks Loose," and in *PR Week* as one of 22 "crunch-time counselors who should be on the speed dial in a crisis."