

**PUBLIC
RELATIONS**

Advanced Communication Series



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A type of public relations strategy, the goodwill speech builds the public's favorable feeling toward you in a subtle, indirect way. Instead of making a verbal appeal or "sales pitch," you use the speech to perform a service that is related to your business or cause. By providing the audience members with helpful information that they can use in their daily lives, you generate positive feelings toward you and your product and increase their willingness to eventually buy your product.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare a talk that will build goodwill for your organization by supplying useful information of interest to the audience.
- ▶ Favorably influence the audience by skillful and friendly delivery of your talk.

Time: Five to seven minutes

THE GOODWILL SPEECH

Businesses and organizations know that how they convey and maintain their image is vital to their success. Whether they are announcing new products or services, influencing consumer behavior in their favor, or responding to public concerns, they depend on public relations techniques to convey their messages and influence public opinion.

Some people confuse public relations with publicity. Public relations refers to a variety of marketing strategies that strengthen a person's or organization's credibility, enhance their image, develop goodwill, or influence public opinion. Publicity is one of these strategies, and it involves media coverage such as news stories, feature articles, radio and television interviews, public appearances, and reviews. Other strategies include speeches, speakers bureaus, sponsorships, charitable contributions, special events, newsletters, and websites.

Public relations also should not be confused with advertising. You pay for advertising. If you place an advertisement in a newspaper or magazine, you pay for the space the ad uses as well as for the number of times it appears. You also control the content of the ad and can make it favorable to your product, service, or organization. Publicity is free. For example, if a newspaper editor considers your product or service newsworthy and assigns a reporter to write an article about it, the result is public relations. Because you didn't pay for the article and it was written by an independent party, readers consider the article more credible and are more likely to be influenced by it. The risk, however, is that you have no control over the article's content and whether it is favorable to your product, service, or organization, although you certainly can try to influence the reporter.

Public relations isn't just for big corporations and politicians. If you are looking for a job or vying for a promotion, you could benefit from public relations.

EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT FROM PUBLIC RELATIONS

Corporations and politicians are skilled at public relations. In fact, they usually employ public relations professionals whose sole function is to find ways to enhance their image, develop goodwill, and influence public opinion. You are familiar with the corporations that sponsor major sporting events or donate money to the local university. You

have seen the politician presiding over the groundbreaking ceremony for a new civic center. These activities were the work of public relations professionals seeking to build public goodwill toward their employers and enhance their employers' image in the community.

But public relations isn't just for big corporations and politicians. If you are looking for a job or vying for a promotion, you could benefit from public relations. Maybe you're trying to raise funds for a school, church, or other community organization, advance a cause, or draw the public's attention to a problem. Or perhaps you've written a book or invented a gadget that people may find of interest. Public relations strategies can help.

YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL

Public relations usually has one of three purposes:

1. To create public opinion where none currently exists
2. To reinforce an existing opinion
3. To change an existing opinion

Whichever the purpose, the ultimate goal of public relations is to cause people to do something you want them to do or to agree with your point of view. Information and verbal appeals play a role in changing people's behaviors or beliefs, but the more subtle, indirect efforts and strategies found in public relations often are more effective.

THE GOODWILL SPEECH

The goodwill speech is one type of public relations strategy, which this speech project and the next one address. Another type is the persuasive speech. Projects 3 and 4 concern the persuasive speech.


Goodwill is the positive or favorable attitude a person has toward someone or something. You, your company or organization want the public to view you in a positive light. The purpose of a goodwill speech is to build the public's favorable feeling toward you. This kind of speech is not a sales pitch or heavy-handed attempt to persuade. Instead, you use your speech to perform a service that is related to your business or cause. You provide audience members with information helpful to them in their lives and hope that, in turn, several of them will eventually buy your product. In doing so you establish yourself as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and helpful.

Suppose you are an auto mechanic and want to make the public aware of your business. You offer to speak to a women's club about common auto repair swindles and how to recognize them. By doing so you are building goodwill toward your business and positioning yourself as a credible and honest mechanic. The women will view you favorably and most likely some of them eventually will patronize your business or recommend it to a friend.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute speech of goodwill for Toastmasters International.

Your speech should consist of information on the subject of public speaking, such as tips on how to prepare, conquer jittery nerves, a discussion of a history-making speech, or showing how good communication is important in business and in the community. Limit direct references to Toastmasters to the introduction given by the Toastmaster of the meeting, your opening,



Use your speech to perform a service that is related to your business or cause. You provide audience members with information helpful to them in their lives and hope that, in turn, several of them will eventually buy your product.

conclusion, and casual comments during the speech. By supplying useful information and demonstrating good speaking skills yourself, you will build your audience's goodwill toward Toastmasters. Since you are representing Toastmasters to your audience, use your best speaking skills and have full mastery of your subject.

Later, you may want to develop this speech into a talk to be delivered to other organizations on behalf of your Toastmasters club.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE GOODWILL SPEECH**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this talk is to present a five- to seven-minute speech of goodwill on behalf of Toastmasters International. The speaker should present useful information on the subject of public speaking, with the references to Toastmasters limited to the introduction, conclusion, or casual comments during the speech. In addition to your oral evaluation, please give written answers to the questions below.

- ▶ How did the audience react to the speaker?

- ▶ How was Toastmasters mentioned in the speech? Was it brought in smoothly and naturally, or did it seem forced, like an advertisement?

- ▶ Comment on the information presented. Did the speaker perform a service for the audience?

- ▶ Assuming you knew nothing about this organization beforehand, would you be favorably impressed after this presentation? Why?

- ▶ What else might the speaker have said to promote Toastmasters?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Radio talk shows are an excellent way to tell thousands of people about your organization or business at virtually no cost to you or your organization. As a guest on a talk show, you have the opportunity to talk openly and favorably about your organization or business to build goodwill. Because radio is a vocal medium, your physical appearance, facial expressions and eye contact don't matter. Instead, you must rely on your voice to convey enthusiasm, passion, sincerity, and friendliness.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Present a positive image of you and your company or organization on a simulated radio talk show.
- ▶ Prepare a talk designed to build goodwill toward an organization by presenting factual information.
- ▶ Understand the dynamics of a successful radio talk show.
- ▶ Prepare for the questions that may be asked of you during the radio interview.

Time: Three to five minutes for the presentation, plus two to three minutes for questions and answers

▶ **Base your presentation on factual information relevant to your audience and be sure to point out how your organization is concerned about audience members' interests and goals.**

THE RADIO TALK SHOW

Recently, talk radio programs have become popular, with thousands airing daily or weekly around the world. Filling so much air time can be challenging for radio producers. They are always looking for interesting guests who can give advice, offer relevant commentary or information, be entertaining or even controversial.

These radio talk shows are excellent public relations vehicles. Depending on the market, you can reach hundreds or thousands with your message at virtually no cost to you or your organization.

TYPES OF SHOWS

There are several different types of talk shows.

- ▶ **Advice.** The host is an expert in a particular field, and listeners call in to get answers to their questions related to that field. For example, an investment counselor may host a weekly radio program where she answers callers' questions about investing. Or a psychologist may host a daily program where he answers listeners' questions about personal problems and relationships.
- ▶ **Controversial.** The host invites one or more guests to discuss a controversial issue, with the host serving as a moderator for the discussion. The host is often deliberately rude, adversarial, and outrageous, provoking arguments or ridiculing the guests and their beliefs. On some of these programs, listeners' are invited to telephone the host to voice their opinions, too, and may be subject to the same rude treatment as the program's guests.
- ▶ **Feature.** The host invites one or more guests to philosophize, discuss current events or other issues or controversial subjects on which the guests are experts. The host serves as moderator or interviewer. Unlike the controversial program, the feature program is more civilized and the host is courteous and considerate.

This speech project concerns the last type of talk show and your appearance on the program as a guest. The program representative contacted your company or organization because it is planning a show on local businesses and their influence on the town and its future, and the program producer wants to devote a part of the show to your company or organization. The show is recorded live. You are appearing on the program because your organization's president thought that with your Toastmasters training you would be the best representative. In the

program's format, you will have three to five minutes to speak about your organization, then your host will ask a few questions.

In Project 1, your strategy was to build goodwill by providing a service to the audience. In this project, you will provide positive information about your organization directly to the audience.

RESEARCH

Because your goodwill speech will supply information to help the audience view your sponsoring organization in a favorable light, you should be an expert on the subject. This means you must research the background of your organization and its impact on the community. Information might include a brief history of the company and why it considers the town important, as well as its own value to the town. Base your presentation on factual information relevant to your audience and be sure to point out how your organization is concerned about audience members' interests and goals. Reinforce your facts with examples or stories to humanize them. Although you will be presenting the facts most favorable to your organization, you should also acknowledge information that may not be so favorable.

Even though this speech is about your organization, not you, be sure to establish your expertise at the beginning of the talk or have the introducer include your credentials. Your listeners need to know why you are qualified to speak on the organization's behalf.

PREPARING FOR RADIO

Listen to the program several times before your appearance. Get familiar with the format and the host's style. Make a note of the host's name and the program name and keep the note nearby during the program. It would be embarrassing if you referred to your host by the wrong name or you forgot the name of the program on which you are appearing.

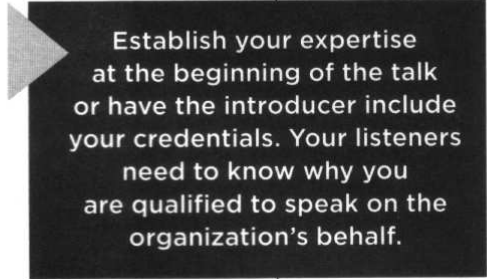
Radio is a vocal medium. Your physical appearance is irrelevant. Facial expressions and eye contact don't matter, either. What matters is how you sound. Be enthusiastic and passionate, use vocal variety, keep your tone friendly and speak clearly. If you're not excited about your topic or sound bored or monotonous, your listeners will quickly tune out.

Since you are not seen by anyone but your host, if necessary you may refer to note cards for your facts and even for your presentation. Don't read from the cards, however, because you will sound stiff and formal on the air. Speak in a conversational tone. Sit up straight in your chair with both feet on the floor or, if possible, stand during your presentation. Your voice quality and alertness will increase.

Avoid fussing with papers, eating or drinking during the program because the microphone will pick up these sounds and broadcast them. You may, however, keep a glass of lukewarm water nearby for emergency use in case your mouth gets dry or you develop a cough.

PARTICIPATION BY TELEPHONE

Since no audience is physically present in the studio for most radio programs, sometimes guests participate from another location by telephone. If you will be speaking by telephone from your home or office, be sure to use a good quality telephone so your voice will sound clear and full. Make sure there are no background noises, such as traffic or children playing. Don't turn on the



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radio to listen to yourself because this causes feedback that interferes with the program. Before the program begins, check that you can clearly hear the host, particularly if she or he will ask you questions. For technical reasons, the host's voice may seem distant over the telephone. As you respond, resist the temptation to speak louder than you normally would.

Stand rather than sit during your speech; your voice will sound more forceful.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Because this program is informational, not confrontational, the producer or host may appreciate it if you provide appropriate questions for him or her to ask you. Or before the show you may inquire about the kind of questions you will be asked, if not the actual questions themselves. If neither of these options is possible, anticipate the questions that will be asked. If practical, ask your colleagues to help draft a list of possible questions and answers. This gives you an opportunity to plan your responses. Keep your answers short.

If you are being interviewed by telephone, you will not have visual contact with the host. The host will rely on you to signal that you have finished answering the question. When you have finished speaking, pause. This moment of silence cues the host that you have finished and are ready for the next question.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

This project consists of several parts.

First, prepare and rehearse a three- to five-minute public relations speech for a radio talk show. The speech should create goodwill toward an organization by giving the audience information about it and its role in your community. The organization need not be one with which you are associated. You may mention your organization's name more frequently than in Project 1.

Before the club meeting, select a partner who will act as the talk show host. Prepare an introduction for yourself and give it to your partner to rehearse. Also ask your partner to prepare three questions to ask you about your organization whose answers are not already covered in your talk. You may want to give your partner some suggestions for these questions, although your partner is not obligated to use them. Allow two to three minutes at the end of your presentation for the questions and your answers. Read "Answering Questions" in the Appendix for tips and techniques for successfully handling question-and-answer sessions.

If possible, simulate the staging for a real radio talk show, with you and your partner seated at a table with microphones (real or imagined) placed in front of each of you.

For the presentation itself, have the host introduce you, then give your presentation. When you have finished, the host will ask you three questions about your organization, and you must answer each in a manner that will reflect favorably on your organization. Because most talk shows are not rehearsed, do not rehearse the presentation or interview with your partner.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE RADIO TALK SHOW**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this presentation is to build goodwill toward an organization by giving the audience factual information about its operation and its effect on the community. The talk should be supported by research and present a positive image of the speaker and his or her organization on a simulated radio talk show. The speaker has been asked to appear as a guest on the talk show, with another club member serving as the talk show host. In addition to presenting the three- to five-minute talk, the speaker is to spend two to three minutes at the end of the presentation answering several questions asked by the host. Both the presentation and the answers to the questions should present a positive image of the organization to the audience. Please read the entire project before you hear the presentation. Remember, you are evaluating only the guest, not the host.

- ▶ Was the guest's expertise clearly established in the host's introduction?

- ▶ How relevant was the speech to the audience and its interests and goals?

- ▶ How thorough was the speaker's research?

- ▶ How well did the speaker use vocal variety in conveying his or her message? Did it detract from or enhance the message?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker answer the questions asked?

- ▶ Assuming you had no previous knowledge of the speaker's organization, were you favorably impressed with the organization after listening to the presentation and the questions and answers? Why?

- ▶ How effectively do you think the speaker would have been on a real talk show?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

People today are mistrustful, hesitant to believe anyone they don't know personally. A public relations speaker knows how to persuade audience members to adopt a proposal, accept an idea, or take a certain action. Appeal to their self-interest and emotion, showing how your idea is in their best interests and how they will benefit from your proposal or position. When you support your ideas with relevant data and convey sincerity and conviction, your audience will trust and believe you.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Direct a persuasive appeal to the audience's self-interests using a combination of fact and emotion in a speech delivered in such a manner that it appears extemporaneous.
- ▶ Persuade the audience to adopt your viewpoint by the use of standard persuasive techniques.
- ▶ Use at least one visual aid to enhance the audience's understanding.

Time: Five to seven minutes

THE PERSUASIVE APPROACH

An important skill in public relations is the ability to persuade your audience to adopt your proposal, accept your idea, or take the action you suggest. Today's audiences are skeptical. They are reluctant to trust company, community, and government officials they don't know personally, and even if they do, they are cautious. A public relations speaker must know how to win over audiences.

ESTABLISHING TRUST

If people don't like and trust you, they will not want to help you in any way or take any action you recommend. You have to earn people's trust. You do this by:

- ▶ Being honest about yourself and your company or organization or product
- ▶ Being realistic about what you can and cannot do
- ▶ Communicating with the public, answering questions, and providing information
- ▶ Showing concern for the public and its goals and interests

You can also earn trust by presenting facts that support your position. People are more likely to believe you if you give them relevant data from reliable, respected sources which illustrate your point.

OTHER FACTORS

Trust is built not only on fact and logic, but on two other factors.

Self-Interest. People are motivated by their own interests.

A persuasive message is more likely to be accepted if it appeals

to listeners' personal needs and beliefs. Address the issue from your audience's viewpoint, not from your own. Determining your audience's needs and interests is the most difficult task in developing a persuasive speech as the information you need may not be readily accessible. You may have to do library research, read reports, and talk with people to get the information you seek.

Emotion. Using humor, fear, drama, or excitement in your speech makes the audience more receptive to your message. A joke that's relevant to your message helps the audience like you and removes their fear that you are about to bore them. A story that illustrates a point you make might capture their attention. If you are calling for

A persuasive message is more likely to be accepted if it appeals to listeners' personal needs and beliefs. Address the issue from your audience's viewpoint, not from your own.

the audience to take action, a strong dramatic appeal at the end of your speech may be just the encouragement they need.

CONSTRUCTING YOUR SPEECH

A speech of this nature requires careful preparation. If you appear too aggressive or adamant, your audience will distrust you. If you aren't forceful enough, they will ignore your message. You want to come across as sincere, friendly, and concerned about your listeners. Following these steps will help.

1. State your proposal or position. Be sure the audience knows exactly what you are advocating and why.
2. Show how your idea is in their best interests and does not conflict with their goals or beliefs.
3. Show how they will benefit from your proposal or position.
4. Tell the audience what they can do to act on your proposal or position.

Be sure to recognize opposing viewpoints even though your audience may not be aware of them. Acknowledge them, then carefully explain why they don't have merit. Back up your explanations with facts whenever possible. Your listeners' willingness to hear and consider your views is enhanced when you recognize that other views also exist.

YOUR SPEECH DELIVERY

Your audience will be more inclined to trust and believe you if you demonstrate sincerity and conviction by speaking extemporaneously. Otherwise they may think, "If you really believe this, why do you need to read it?" Memorize the outline of your speech, but leave the exact choice of words open. This helps you develop a convincing conversational style and demonstrates your sincerity as you speak. Rehearse the talk several times so the words come easily, but don't memorize the entire presentation.

SHOW THEM

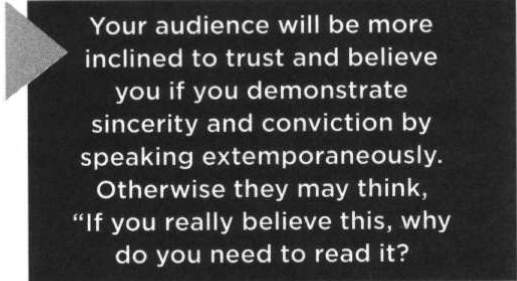
In this type of speech, where you convey data, you should use visual aids. We live in a visually oriented society, so knowing how to use visual aids is invaluable.

Choose the visual aid that best fits your subject and the type of data you wish to present as well as the equipment available to you. You may find computer-based visuals, overhead transparencies, hand-outs, flipcharts or whiteboards suitable.

Whichever medium you choose, thoroughly rehearse until you can use it confidently.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Prepare, rehearse, and deliver a five- to seven-minute persuasive speech on a subject of your choice. Secure the goodwill of the audience and convince them through the use of facts, logic, emotion, and appeals to their self-interest. Use at least one visual aid to convey information or enhance your presentation. Conclude the speech with an effective call to action.



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EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **THE PERSUASIVE APPROACH**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this talk is to persuade the audience to adopt a point of view advocated by the speaker in a speech of five to seven minutes. The talk is to be convincing on both the logical and emotional levels and delivered in an extemporaneous manner. The focus of the talk should be on the personal interests of the audience. The speaker must use at least one visual aid. In addition to your oral evaluation, please give written answers to the questions below.

▶ How convincing was the speaker's argument on his or her viewpoint?

▶ How effective was the speaker's emotional appeal?

▶ How closely did the presentation relate to the audience's interests?

▶ Comment on the smoothness and effectiveness of the talk.

▶ How did the visual aid(s) contribute to the speaker's persuasive effort?

▶ How persuasive was the speech?

▶ Did the speaker change your opinion? How?

▶ What else might the speaker have done to convince you?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Openly hostile audiences are challenging to any public relations speaker. Your goal is to dispel the hostility and convince them that your side has some merit, not necessarily to change their mind. Find areas of agreement and focus on them. Look at the issue from audience members' point of view, then show them that your side has merits, too. Ally with emotional symbols, tactfully refute opposing arguments, and appeal to the audience's self-interests. Your voice and eye contact convey sincerity, so use them to your advantage.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Prepare a talk to persuade a hostile audience to at least consider your position on a controversial issue.
- ▶ Demonstrate sincerity when presenting your viewpoint.

Time: Three to five minutes for the presentation, and two to three minutes for questions and answers

SPEAKING UNDER FIRE

Hostile audiences are common – especially in politics, the business world, and community leadership. The chief executive officer of a large retail chain speaks at a luncheon and is confronted by audience members who are angry that the company is putting small independent retailers out of business. A government official faces a senior citizens group outraged by his vote on a proposal to limit medical services provided to the elderly. When speaking to such audiences, the way you handle their hostility determines your success.

DISPEL THE HOSTILITY

In this project, the audience will be opposed to your side of a controversial issue, not hostile to you personally. Your objective is to dispel that hostility and convince them that your side has some merit. You can accomplish this in several ways.

- ▶ **Shift their focus.** The audience probably opposes you because of specific concerns or fears it has. Shift the focus from the points of conflict toward areas on which you all agree. For example, if the controversy concerns a new shopping mall, it probably centers on size and location rather than the positive influence on the local economy. Help the audience understand how a healthy economy benefits everyone.
- ▶ **Show them a new way of viewing your side.** Clarify the problem or argument from the listeners' point of view, then show them that your side is not as bad as they may think. Do this in a helpful, informative manner, not in an argumentative or arrogant way. You may be outnumbered by those in opposition, but you gain credibility if you support your position with facts and examples.
- ▶ **Ally with positive symbols.** Along with your facts, be sure to include the emotional aspect of persuasion discussed in Project 3. Controversial issues always involve symbols, and the side most effectively associated with positive symbols, such as law, economic security, conservation, or family will be more likely to prevail. Relating your side to such emotional symbols is a powerful persuasive technique.

Your objective is to dispel that hostility and convince them that your side has some merit.

- ▶ **Tactfully refute the opposition.** You need to counter the opposition arguments that already have convinced your audience, but do it in a non-threatening manner. Avoid any statement that could be interpreted as a personal attack on your listeners or other statements that question their education or integrity.
- ▶ **Appeal to their self-interests.** Illustrate ways in which adopting your viewpoint will be more helpful to them personally than if they followed the opposition.

SHOW YOUR SINCERITY

Maintain eye contact. In most cultures, the act of looking someone directly in the eyes is a symbol of sincerity. Failure to meet another person's gaze when speaking implies insincerity. Speakers who establish eye contact are considered more truthful, honest, credible, friendly, and skillful than those who do not. You may be uncomfortable meeting the eyes of someone who is openly hostile. But by looking at your listeners as individuals, you convey to them that you are sincere and care about them.

Keep your voice pleasant and easy to listen to.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

Prepare, rehearse and deliver a three- to five-minute public relations speech to persuade a hostile audience that your side of a controversial subject at least has merit and should seriously be considered. Follow the recommendations outlined for reducing hostility to your viewpoint. Select a generally unpopular point of view – perhaps one that you also oppose – in order to assure opposition. Use visual aids to support your points if appropriate.

Do this in a helpful, informative manner, not in an argumentative or arrogant way.

Following the speech, conduct a two- to three-minute question-and-answer period. Your fellow club members will ask you questions about your position. Ask the Toastmaster of the meeting to advise members of their roles and to encourage them to prepare hostile questions. In your answers strive to appeal to their self-interests. As you prepare for the speech, read "Answering Questions" in the Appendix for tips and techniques for successfully handling question-and-answer sessions.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR **SPEAKING UNDER FIRE**

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The purpose of this talk is to present a three- to five-minute speech to an audience assumed to be hostile to the speaker's position on a controversial issue. The speaker should attempt to lessen the opposition and persuade the audience to at least accept that the position has some merit. Following the speech, the speaker is to conduct a two- to three-minute question-and-answer period. In addition to your oral evaluation, please write answers to the questions below.

- ▶ How effective was the speech's organization?

- ▶ How did the speaker use logic and facts in support of his or her viewpoint?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker use emotion and appeals to the audience's self-interest in support of his or her viewpoint?

- ▶ How well did the speaker use eye contact to demonstrate sincerity?

- ▶ How did the speaker use his or her voice to influence the audience?

- ▶ If the speaker used visual aids, how did they contribute to the presentation?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker answer the questions?

- ▶ Assuming you were initially opposed to the speaker's position, how would you feel after the presentation?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

How you communicate with the public during a crisis affects your organization's reputation and possibly its very survival. In times of trouble you want to favorably impress the media and convey concern to those who are directly affected as well as to the general public. You can successfully handle any crisis when you a) know the message you want to tell the media and the public, b) are truthful, c) admit mistakes, refrain from speculation, and d) continue to provide relevant information as it becomes available.

OBJECTIVES:

- ▶ Learn strategies for communicating to the media about a company crisis.
- ▶ Prepare a speech for the media about a company crisis that builds and maintains a positive image for the company.
- ▶ Answer questions from the media in a manner that reflects positively on the company.

Time: Four to six minutes for the presentation, and three to five minutes for the question-and-answer period

THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SPEECH

Your company's chief executive officer has just been indicted for embezzlement. The new product your company produces has been found defective and has caused injury to people. Your employer, a candidate for a government office, has been accused of tax evasion. Your club's treasurer has fled with the club's money.

These situations are considered public relations crises. How you communicate with the public during a crisis directly affects your organization's reputation and, in some cases, its survival. Your own career and reputation may suffer, too.

When you and your organization find yourself in a crisis, you have several audiences with which you must communicate: Employees, customers, stockholders, investors, suppliers, competitors, government officials, members, and boards of directors. But the most important audience to consider is the news media. What the news media report in their first stories, and how they consider your handling of the crisis, will set the tone for the entire crisis.

SOME PUBLIC RELATIONS CRISES

Consider these public relations crises from the past few decades.

The Exxon Valdez. In March 1989, the oil supertanker Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound in Alaska, spilling more than 10 million gallons of oil into the water. The oil eventually covered 3,000 square miles of ocean, killing thousands of birds and fish, ruining spawning grounds and fish hatcheries, and putting fishermen and industries related to fishing out of work. Shortly after the spill occurred, Exxon company executives initially refused to comment, leaving it to an Exxon company spokesman to address the media. The spokesman told the media that the company had procedures in place to deal with oil spills. However, the media soon pointed out how these procedures were not being implemented and little was being done to contain the spill.

The public was outraged as they saw the pictures of the dead wildlife on television and heard eyewitness accounts of the disaster. The New York Times quoted one company official as saying the damage to the environment was minimal. Another said the media were exaggerating the situation. Exxon chairman Lawrence Rawl didn't travel to Alaska himself until three weeks after the spill. The company's response indicated that it was not concerned about the

When you and your organization find yourself in a crisis, you have several audiences with which you must communicate.

environmental and economic costs of the spill. Several years later when the company agreed to pay 900 million dollars to settle lawsuits and another 100 million dollars to pay fines, Rawl told stockholders that the settlement would have no noticeable effect on the company's financial results. This renewed the government and public outrage. The entire crisis caused consumers to boycott Exxon gas stations and return Exxon credit cards.

The Kursk Submarine. In August 2000 the Russian submarine Kursk sank in the Barents Sea on a Saturday afternoon, and that evening Russian President Vladimir Putin left for a vacation at a resort by the Black Sea. He remained on holiday and kept silent on the tragedy for several days before making a brief statement to the press, and that statement was filled with inaccuracies. The impression he gave the media and the public was that he didn't consider the disaster important, and the Russian press criticized him heavily.

Crises do not have to be so damaging to a company or organization, however. Consider how Johnson & Johnson handled the situation it experienced in 1982 when cyanide-laced capsules of Extra Strength Tylenol caused seven deaths in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A. The company expressed its concern for the public and immediately recalled and destroyed 22 million bottles of Tylenol at a cost of \$100 million. It established a toll-free telephone number that customers and others could call to get information. The company answered every press inquiry and its chairman appeared on national television programs. An investigation revealed that the tainted capsules had been tampered with in the stores and Johnson & Johnson was not at fault. Still, the company produced tamper-resistant packaging for its products, which it introduced two months after the deaths. Within three months the company's sales were almost to the level they were before the crisis.

SUCCESSFUL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The crisis you experience may not be of the magnitude of the Exxon Valdez or Johnson & Johnson. Perhaps your company is being bought by a larger corporation or is planning employee layoffs. Maybe your factory has been cited for unsafe working conditions for some employees. Perhaps the community organization you're involved with has been accused of discrimination. While these situations may not seem like crises, they affect people and, in some cases, the economy, and they may be of interest to the media. You should act quickly to address the media and the public's concerns.

The following tips will help you prepare a crisis management speech:

- ▶ **Identify your message.** What do you want your speech to accomplish? Do you want to inform people, alert them to danger, calm them?
- ▶ **Know what you can't say.** Sometimes information is confidential, such as personnel records, financial data, or trade secrets, and it can't be discussed with anyone.
- ▶ **Show concern.** Express sympathy for those affected by the crisis ("Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends") as well as concern ("We have safety procedures in place to prevent this, but apparently something did not work. We'll investigate where the failure occurred so we can prevent it from happening again").
- ▶ **Provide relevant information.** What happened? Why did it happen? When? Where? Who was responsible? What are you doing to resolve the situation?
- ▶ **Be truthful.** Do not try to mislead or lie. Reporters will find out, and your credibility will suffer.
- ▶ **Do not guess.** Tell only what you know for certain, not what might be.

But the most important audience to consider is the news media.

- ▶ **Admit mistakes.** Take responsibility if your company or organization is at fault and tell what is being done so the mistake does not occur again.
- ▶ **Admit that you don't know everything.** As the crisis occurs, you may not have all the information that the media wants. Tell reporters when you don't have all the facts and assure them that you will tell them as soon as you do.

YOUR ASSIGNMENT

For this project, you will assume you are a spokesperson for a company or organization that is experiencing a crisis. You may choose the situation, perhaps taking an incident from the news or creating an imaginary situation. You'll prepare and present a four- to six-minute crisis management speech about the situation, incorporating the above tips, striving to build and maintain a positive image of the company or organization.

Take responsibility if your company or organization is at fault and tell what is being done so the mistake does not occur again.

Following the speech, conduct a three- to five-minute question-and-answer period. Your fellow club members will assume the roles of media reporters, asking you questions about the crisis and your company's handling of it. Ask the Toastmaster of the meeting to advise members of their roles in your introduction and to encourage them to prepare questions as you talk. In your answers, continue to build and maintain the company's positive image. Read "Answering Questions" in the Appendix for tips and techniques on how to successfully handle question-and-answer sessions.

EVALUATION GUIDE FOR THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SPEECH

Title _____

Evaluator _____ Date _____

Note to the Evaluator: The speaker is to assume he or she is a spokesperson for a company or organization that is experiencing a crisis. The speaker may choose the situation, perhaps taking an incident from the news or creating an imaginary situation. The speaker is to present a four- to six-minute crisis management speech to the media about the situation, striving to build and maintain a positive image for the company. Following the speech, the speaker will conduct a three- to five-minute question-and-answer period. Fellow club members will assume the roles of media reporters, asking the speaker questions about the crisis and the company or organization's handling of it. The speaker is to continue to build and maintain a positive image of the company while answering the questions. Read the entire project before you hear the presentation.

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker present his or her message?

- ▶ How convincing was the speaker in explaining the company's position on the situation?

- ▶ How effectively did the speaker create and maintain a positive image of the company?

- ▶ How skillfully did the speaker handle the questions?

- ▶ What, if anything, could the speaker have said to better handle the situation?

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Reporters will want more information than you have provided in your speech. If you try to avoid answering their questions, they may look elsewhere for the information. What they find may not be favorable to you and you may have no opportunity to respond. If you keep communication open and show a willingness to cooperate with the media, the media are more likely to listen to and convey your side of the story.

If you handle the questions well, you will continue to project a positive image of your company. You will be successful if you remember the following:

- ▶ **Be prepared.** Anticipate possible questions and how you will answer each.
- ▶ **Answer all questions in a positive manner.** A reporter may ask a question in a negative manner (“Why did you cheat on your taxes?”) Don’t say, “I never cheated on my taxes.” Repeating the accusation gives it validity. Instead, reply in a positive manner (“I have always paid the full amount of taxes due the government”).
- ▶ **Use short, pithy sentences or phrases.** Be brief in your answers. Reporters love brief comments that effectively present your answer.
- ▶ **Answer one question at a time.** Sometimes a reporter will ask a series of questions. Answer only one, and make sure it is the one that allows you to communicate your objective. If a reporter tries to interrupt you, ignore the interruption and complete your thought, then call on the reporter.
- ▶ **Be calm.** Remember, you want to maintain a positive image. Don’t get angry or impatient with reporters. Be courteous at all times.
- ▶ **Avoid jargon.** Don’t use technical words or terms known only in your industry.
- ▶ **Don’t let your guard down.** There is no such thing as “off the record.” Everything you say may end up on television, on the radio, or in print. Do not say anything that you may regret later.
- ▶ **Never say “no comment.”** The public and the media will interpret this response to mean that you are guilty or that you are hiding something from them.

If you keep communication open and show a willingness to cooperate with the media, the media are more likely to convey your side of the story.

- ▶ **Stand firm.** Reporters may ask the same question over and over, perhaps wording it differently, hoping that you will give them more information even after you have told them that you do not have that information or that it is confidential. Respond with the information you can give, mentioning it over and over if necessary.
- ▶ **Conclude with a positive statement.** End the question-and-answer period with a strong closing statement that reiterates the company's position. Assure the media that you will brief them again as soon as more information is available.

PROJECT COMPLETION RECORD **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

PROJECT	SPEECH TITLE	DATE	VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION'S INITIALS
1. The Goodwill Speech			
2. The Radio Talk Show			
3. The Persuasive Approach			
4. Speaking Under Fire			
5. The Crisis Management Speech			

Save this page to verify your completion of the projects in this manual. Submit the Project Completion Record form from the appropriate manuals when applying for the Advanced Communicator Bronze, Advanced Communicator Silver, or Advanced Communicator Gold awards.