Risk/High Stress/Crisis Communication:

Communicating Effectively in High Concern Situations

Presenter:

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Training Objectives

• Review science-based best practices for risk/high stress/crisis communication
• Present case studies for discussion
• Offer multiple opportunities for practice
Applications

High Stress/High Concern/Risk Situations
Examples:
• Deadlines/Delays/Disruptions/Cyber-security
• Controversial Approvals/Permissions
• Protests/Complaints/Personnel Issues (e.g., Discrimination)

Crisis, Emergencies, and Disasters
Examples:
• Active Shooter Incident
• Natural Hazards (e.g., flooding, extreme weather events)
• Other Crises (e.g., Arrests, Scandals, Reputational)

Organizational Change
Examples
• Reorganizations/Downsizing/Rapid Growth
• Funding Cuts/Closures
• Changes in Technologies/Policies/Procedures/Mission/Leadership
Marital Communication Exercise

According to research, there are seven major topics of marital and family arguments. The seven are:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
Marital Communication Exercise

The seven major topics of marital and family argument or dispute are:

1. Money
2. Children
3. Work versus Family
4. In-laws
5. Division of Labor at Home
6. Intimacy/Sex
7. Communication

(source: Professor John Gottman)
Risk/High Stress Communication: Goals

- Inform and Educate
- Build or Repair Trust
- Persuade/Gain Agreement/Form Positive Relationships

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The structural core of human cortex is the largest subgraph comprising nodes of degree at least $k$, and is derived by recursively peeling off nodes with degree lower than $k$ until none remain [33]. Each node is then assigned a core number, which is defined as the largest $k$ such that the node is still contained in the $k$-core. We performed $k$-core decomposition on binary, high-resolution connection matrices from all five participants and derived the core number for each ROI, as well as the average core number for each anatomical subregion (Figure 5). A large core number indicates that an ROI or region is resistant to this erosive procedure and participates in high-$k$ structural cores of the network. In all participants, full erosion occurs at a core number of 20. The most consistent members of the highest degree $k$-core for each network (Figure 5A and 5B) were the ROIs identified in step (3b) combined with the result of step (4) to compute the connection weight between each pair of ROIs. The result is a weighted network of structural connectivity across the entire brain. In the paper, the 66 cortical regions are labeled as follows: each label consists of two parts, a prefix for the cortical hemisphere (r = right hemisphere, l = left hemisphere) and one of 33 designators: BSTS = bank of the superior temporal sulcus, CAC = caudal anterior cingulate cortex, CMF = caudal middle frontal cortex, CUN = cuneus, ENT = entorhinal cortex, FP = frontal pole, FUS = fusiform gyrus, IP = inferior parietal cortex, IT = inferior temporal cortex, ISTC = isthmus of the cingulate cortex, LOCC = lateral occipital cortex, LOF = lateral orbitofrontal cortex, LING = lingual gyrus, MOF = medial orbitofrontal cortex, MT = middle temporal cortex, PARC = paracentral lobule, PARH = parahippocampal cortex, POPE = pars opercularis, PORB = pars orbitalis, PTRI = pars triangularis, PCAL = pericalcarine cortex, PSTS = postcentral gyrus, PC = posterior cingulate cortex, PREC = precentral gyrus, PCUN = precuneus, RAC = rostral anterior cingulate cortex, RMF = rostral middle frontal cortex, SF = superior frontal cortex, SP = superior parietal cortex, ST = superior temporal cortex, SMAR = supramarginal gyrus, TP = temporal pole, and TT = transverse temporal cortex.
Parts of the Brain Involved in High Stress/Fear (Fight/Freeze/Flight) Response

- Amygdala
- Hippocampus
- Hypothalamus
Resources/Reading List

• Aristotle, “Rhetoric: The Art of Persuasion”
• Kahneman, D., “Thinking Fast and Slow”

===

• Gottman, J. “Relationships”
• Bok, S., “Lying”
• Tannen, D. “You Just Don’t Understand”
Risk/High Stress Communication Agenda

Topic 1. Research-Based Principles, Strategies, and Tools
Topic 2: Changing Landscape
Topic 3: Message Mapping
Topic 4. Briefings
Topic 5. Non-Verbal Communication
Topic 6: Diversity
Topic 7. Advanced Tools
Mental Noise Theory: Cognitive Overload

“The Magic Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information”

*Psychological Review, 1956*

Dr. George A. Miller (Princeton University)
Risk/High Stress Communication Agenda

Topic 1. Research-Based Principles, Strategies, and Tools
If I had all day to cut down a large tree, I would use most of my day to sharpen my axe.

Abraham Lincoln
APP/Preparation Strategy Tool

- **(A) Anticipate**
  - High Stakes/High Risk Issues
  - Stakeholders
  - Stakeholder Questions and Concerns

- **(P) Prepare**
  - Messages
  - Messengers
  - Means (Channels of Communication)

- **(P) Practice**
  - Role Plays
  - Rehearsals
  - Drills and Simulations
Research-Based Tools

• IDK Tool
• KDK Tool
• KISS Tools
  – R3
  – P/R
  – 27/9/3
  – AGL-4
Overview: Three Key Messages

- High stress/high risk communication is a science-based discipline
- High stress/high risk situations change the rules for effective communication
- The key to communication success is anticipation, preparation, and practice
Agenda

*Topic 2: The Changing Landscape*
The Changing Landscape

High stress/high risk situations change the rules for effective communication
Changes

• Attention span

• Verbal
  – “as you know”
  – “but”
  – “absolutes”
  – Caring messages

• Non-Verbal
  – posture
  – hands
  – eyes
Attention Span: Mental Noise Theory:

High Stress:

High stress/mental noise reduces the ability to process communication by on average 80%.
Trust Determination -- Low Stress

Competence and Expertise

50%
Trust Determination -- High Stress

Typically assessed in first 9–30 seconds

- Listening, Caring, Empathy, Compassion: 50%
- Competence, Expertise: 15–20%
- Honesty, Openness: 15–20%
- All Other Factors: 15–20%
When people are stressed and upset, they typically:

...
Risk, Crisis, and Change Management: Basis Tools/Templates

• 27/9/3
• CCO
• 1N=3P
Case Study
Rumseld’s “Known Unknowns” Message

• “As we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know.

• We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know.

• But there are also unknown unknowns – the ones we don't know we don't know.”

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, News Briefing on Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, February 12, 2002

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*Topic 3: Message Maps*
APP Strategy

• (A) Anticipate
  – High Stakes/High Risk Issues
  – Stakeholders
  – Stakeholder Questions and Concerns

• (P) Prepare
  – Messages
  – Messengers
  – Means (Channels of Communication)

• (P) Practice
  – Role Plays
  – Rehearsals
  – Drills and Simulations
Anticipated Questions

95% Rule

Can:
• predict 95% of questions

Can therefore:
• prepare in advance answers ahead of time
• develop key messages and supporting facts for priority questions
• use bridging statements to return to or repeat key messages
• practice delivery
Rule of Three

Triple T Model

• Tell me (as simply as possible, with no more than three messages)
• Tell me more (about each of your three messages)
• Tell me again (repeat your three key messages)
Message Map: High Stress/Risk Communication Tool:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder: Question or Concern:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Message 1</th>
<th>Key Message 2</th>
<th>Key Message 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(9 words approx.)</td>
<td>(9 word approx.)</td>
<td>(9 words approx.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Message Map:
Question: What can people do to protect themselves from mosquitoes carrying Zika?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Message</th>
<th>Key Message</th>
<th>Key Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Remove Standing Water”</td>
<td>“Wear Protective Clothing”</td>
<td>“Use Insect Repellent”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.1</th>
<th>2.1</th>
<th>3.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Puddles</td>
<td>Long Sleeves</td>
<td>DEET</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.2</th>
<th>2.2</th>
<th>3.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flower Pots/ Bird Baths/ Old Tires</td>
<td>Long Pants</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.3</th>
<th>2.3</th>
<th>3.3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cup/Capful of Water</td>
<td>Dusk and Dawn</td>
<td>Medical Research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Repurposing Message Maps

• Briefings
• Fact sheets
• Web sites
• Social media content (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Instagram)
• Podcast scripts
• Briefings
• ...
•...
Message Mapping Tools

- IDK
- KDK
- R3
- P/R

==

- 27/9/3
- CCO
- 1N=3P
Apology Case Study:
Man Dragged from an
Overbooked United Airlines Flight

"This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers."

Oscar Munoz, United Airlines, Chief Executive Officer, April 10, 2017
Key Messages in a Successful Apology

I. Primary Factors*
1. Apologizes and admits to the mistake, harm, or offence
2. Accepts ownership and responsibility
3. Promises a future that will not repeat the past

II. Additional Factors
1. Provides evidence of regret, remorse, sorrow, contrition, or penitence (e.g., offers compensation or resources)
2. Is timely
3. Gives power to the offended party (e.g., oversight)

* Continually shows authentic and sincere caring and empathy
Case Study: BP Oil Spill
BP Oil Spill (2010):
BP CEO Tony Hayward

“I’m sorry. We’re sorry for the massive disruption it has caused their lives. And there is no one who wants this over more than I do. I’d like my life back.” (May 30, 2010)
Agenda

Topic 4. Risk/High Stress Briefings
10/20/30 High Stress Briefing Model

- 3 bullets per slide (vs. 7 bullets per slides)

=====

- 10
- 20
- 30
Power Point Briefings: 
High Stress/High Risk Issues

• 3 bullets per slide

==

• 10 slides (maximum)
• 20 minutes (maximum)
• 30 words per slide (maximum)
10/20/30 Power Point Briefing

Slide 1. Why Briefing Content is important/Empathy/Caring/Listening (max. 27 words, 3 reasons)

Slide 2. Three Key Messages (max. 27 words)

Slide 3. Key Message 1 with support

Slide 4. Key Message 2 with support

Slide 5. Key Message 3 with support

Slide 6. Repeat Three Key Messages

Slide 7. Next Steps/Future Actions

Slides 8-10. Visuals (Optional)
Mental Noise Theory: Simplifying the Message

Visuals

• Faster processing
• Greater attention
• Greater retention
Case Study – NASA Space Shuttle Challenger Accident (1986)

• Seven astronauts on board (including school teacher)
• Watched by millions (including millions of school children)
• Broke apart 73 seconds into flight (killed all seven crew members)
High Stress/High Risk Communication Resources: Visualization

• Tufte, E., “Visual Explanations”
• Tufte, E., “The Visual Display of Quantitative Information”
• Roam, D. “Back of the Napkin”
What is an Open House?
Topic 5: Nonverbal Communication
Nonverbal Communication
Non-Verbal Communications

• Provides up to 75 percent of message
• Is quickly noticed and override verbal content
• Is initially interpreted negatively
Non-Verbal Communication: Western European Culture

- Eyes (Facial Expressions)
- Posture
- Voice
- Hands
- Dress (Overall Appearance)
Agenda

*Topic 6: Diversity*
Diversity

- Cultural
- Personality
- Socio-demographic
- Organizational
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
Cultural Diversity and Cultural Competence: “Iceberg” Model
Case Study: Afghanistan:

Traditionally, high value placed on:

- Hospitality (e.g., drinking tea)
- Honor/Saving face (e.g., avoiding verbally or nonverbally correcting or criticizing a person in front of others)
- Respect for Elders (e.g., greeting elders first)
Case Study: Afghanistan -- Gestures

- Don’t use the left hand to pass things (The left hand is considered polluted)

- Don’t back away when a person gets too close to you or speaks too loud (Personal space is much closer than in the US)

- Don’t point the soles of your feet towards someone (Afghans perceive the soles of the feet and shoes as dirty, nearest to the ground, nearest to the devil)
Organizational Culture
Agenda

Topic 7: Advanced Tools
PERCEPTIONS

• Perception equals or becomes reality
• Perceptions are driven more by emotions and feelings than facts
• That which is perceived as real is real in its consequences
PERCEPTIONS

• Facts alone are insufficient to address stress and concern.

• Less than 5% of stress and concern is driven by facts.

• More than 95% of stress and concern is driven by perception factors.
RISK/HIGH STRESS COMMUNICATION

Contact:
CenterforRiskCommunication.org
Advanced Tools

- TBC
- ALE
- KDD/KDG
Perception Factors

• **Trust**
  – Caring/Empathy
  – Competence/Expertise/
  – Honesty/Transparency

• **Benefits**
  – Personal
  – Organizational
  – Societal

• **Control**
  – Knowledge
  – Choice/Voice
  – Options
## Risk Perception/Fear Factors Amplification Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>1000-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factor</td>
<td>Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
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Typically assessed in first 9–30 seconds

- Listening/Caring/Empathy/Compassion: 50%
- Competence/Expertise: 15–20%
- Honesty/Openness: 15–20%
- All Other Factors: 15–20%

Trust Determination -- High Stress
Trust Ladders: Principles

- **Trust Transference***
  -- A lower trusted source on a trust ladder takes on the trust of the highest trusted source on a trusted ladder that agrees with its messages

- **Trust Reversal***
  -- A lower trusted source on a trust ladder that attacks the trust of a higher trusted source loses further credibility

* Holding constant over variables
Trust Ladder: Pharmaceutical Safety and Effectiveness (USA, 2018)

- …
- Pharmacists
- Professors/Scientists
- Physicians/Nurses/PhDs
- Government Health Officials
- Friend/Family members (with personal experience)
- Media
- Company executives (pharmaceutical)
- Hired experts/consultants
Advanced Tools

- **ALE**
ALE

• Authority (ethos)
• Logic (logos)
• Emotion (pathos)
Argument

*Topic 8: Social Media*
Social Media Planning

• Create a social media plan with as many crisis scenarios as possible
• Identify a suitable space for media personnel to gather
• Create a dedicated social media team
• Have a written social media policy for employees
• Create a system for funneling information to appropriate personnel
Social Media Strategy

• Focus on facts
• Find ways to highlight positive aspects of a situation
• Be proactive in providing your narrative first
• Mirror the behavior you want others to display
Social Media Strategy
Implementation

• Establish a JIC that includes a social media function
• Pull leaders together as soon as possible for incident command
• Post updates every 30 minutes even if there is no additional information
• Remind team members and employees not to talk about the incident through their personal social media accounts
• Identify key players in incident and provide them a handler to facilitate their communication with the media
• Respond immediately to rumors and misinformation
Three Key Messages

- High stress/high risk communication is a science-based discipline
- High concern situations change the rules for effective communication
- The key to communication success is anticipation, preparation, and practice
Thank You!