

MBB 3443 - Professional Communication

Week # 12 & 13

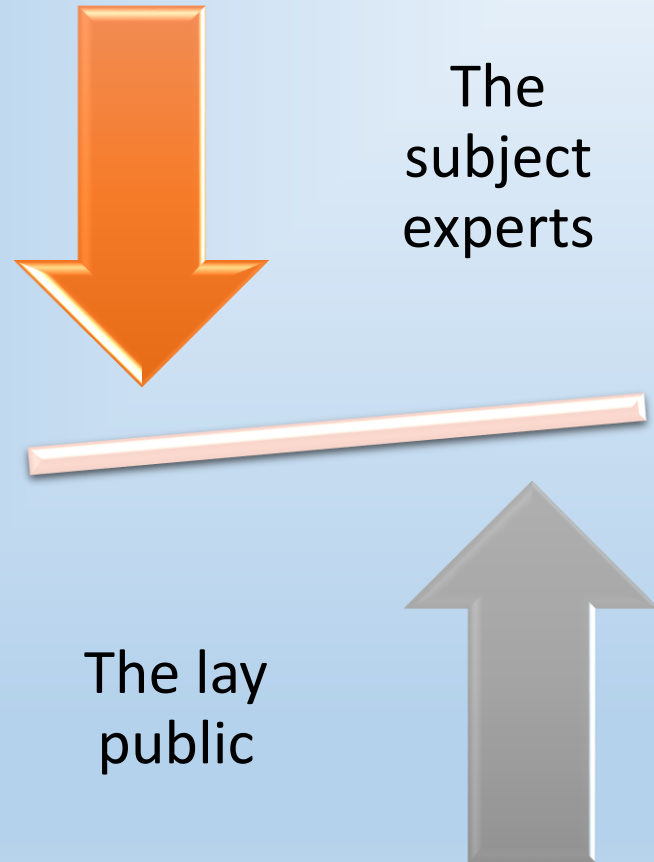
Risk and Crisis Communication

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What is
risk communication?*

The audience plays a dynamic role in risk communication



- 'An open two-way exchange of information and opinion about risk, leading to better understanding and better risk management decisions.'
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1992

Risk communication is different from all other models

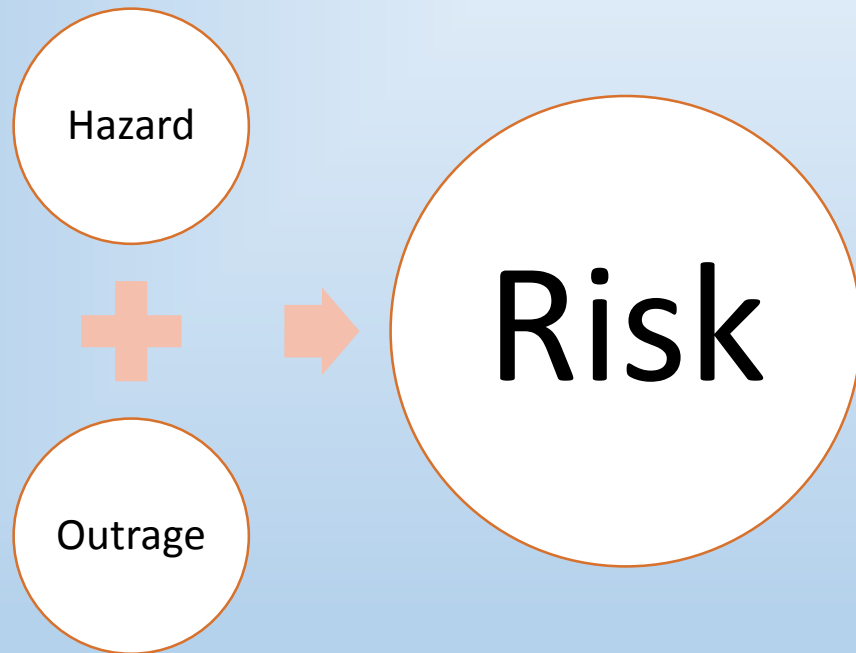
- **Traditional communication**

- 'We tell them.'
- Controls flow of information
- 'Who says what to whom via which channel with what effect?'
- Assumes 'misinterpretation' is the result of 'noise'

- **Risk communication**

- Fosters multi-directional conversations
- Takes risk perception into account
- Supports the response
- Works before, during and after a crisis
- Empowers its publics

In a crisis, traditional models may increase risk by increasing outrage



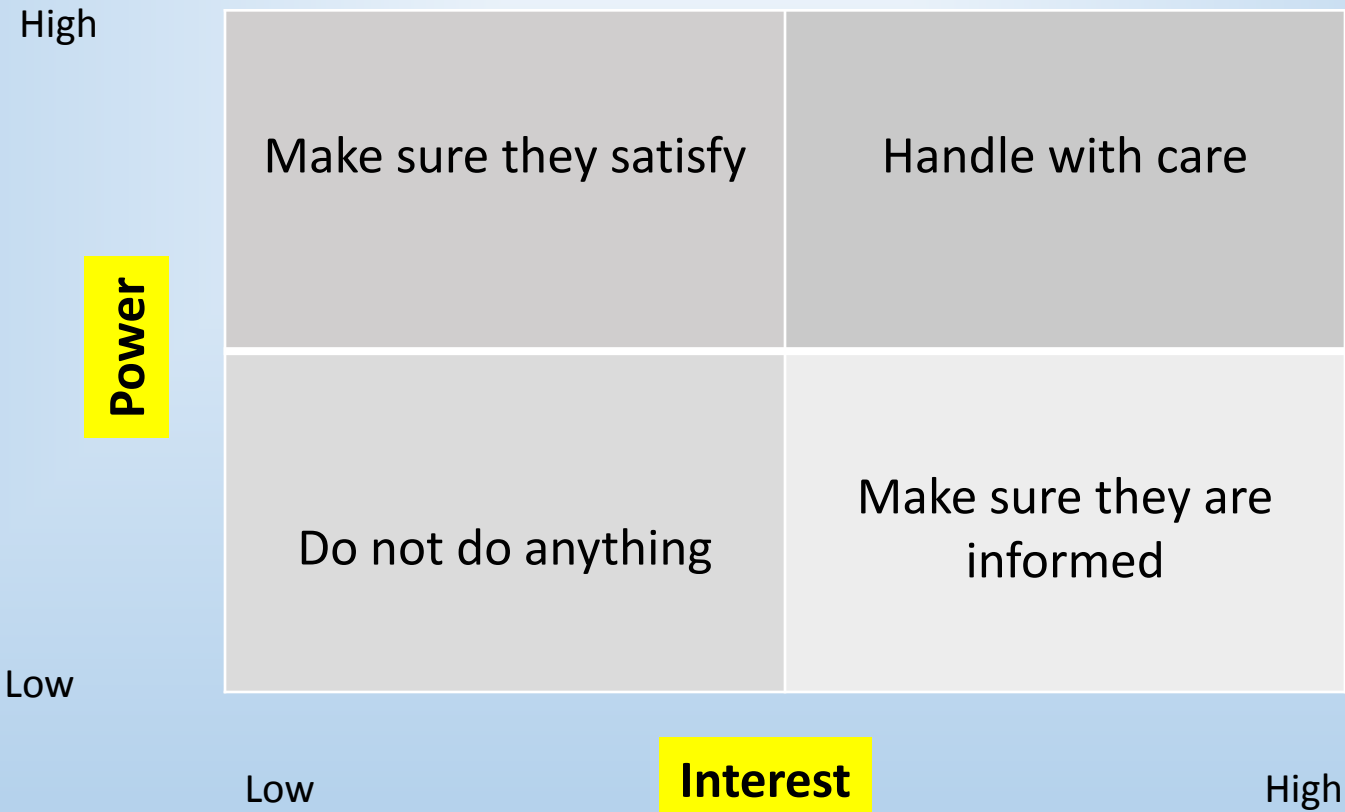
- But risk communication:
 - Takes into account the emotional response to the hazard
 - Empowers stakeholders to make informed decisions
 - Encourages constructive actions and dissuades destructive actions.

How to integrate risk communication with your company's culture

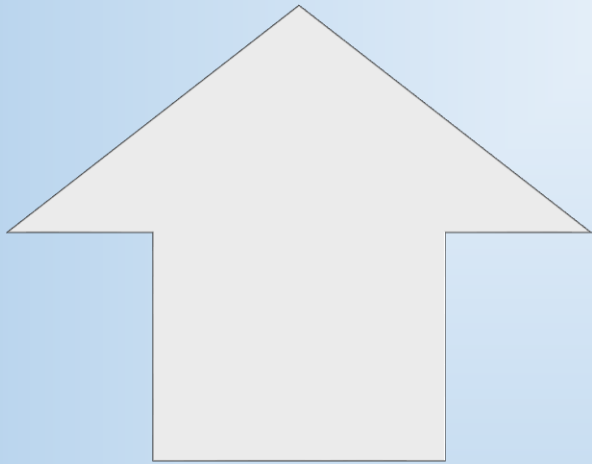


- Know your stakeholders
- Make them partners in managing risk
- Foster two-way communication
- Listen to feedback
- Assess your relationships frequently
- Analyze: 'What have we learned?'

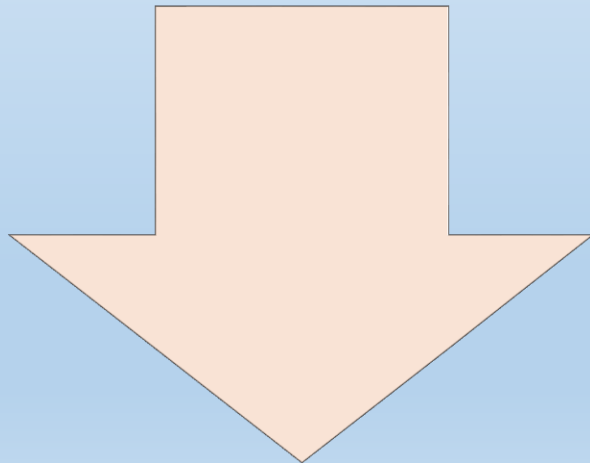
Power/Interest Grid



What's your return on investment in risk communication?



More support for your plans
Increased goodwill
Better relations with decision makers



Fewer injuries, illnesses and deaths
Fewer wasted resources
Fewer and less damaging rumors

What is a crisis?

- A major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization, company or industry, as well as its public, products, services or good name.
- An incident that *interrupts* normal business transactions and can sometimes threaten the existence of the organization.
- Examples: strike, terrorism, boycott, product tampering, product failure (Toyota) or any number of other occurrences.
- Social media has sped things up and changed the playing field.
- Can affect a multinational corporation, a one-person business or even an individual.
- It's essential to plan for the worst and be prepared. A communications plan and a communications management strategy are crucial.

Crisis Management vs. Crisis Communications

Crisis Management:

How to plan and remove risk and uncertainty from a negative and gain *control*.

Crisis Communications:

Creating a dialogue between an organization and its public prior to, during and after a negative occurrence. Minimizing the damage to the image of the organization and creating a more positive reputation than it had before the crisis.

Regardless of the size of an organization, a communications plan is needed as part of a company-wide crisis management plan.

Publics or Stakeholders

- Positive relationships with stakeholders are critical to building a positive reputation. Stakeholders can include employees, customers, stockholders, community members, board members, unions, retirees, etc.
- Public relations is concerned primarily with reputation.
- Research shows that ongoing positive two-way communication and having a plan is key to avoiding and limiting crises.



The Media

- See themselves as advocates for the general public.
- Will likely show up in person in a crisis.
- Will likely be a PR department's biggest adversary in a crisis.



Role of Public Relations

- Should never act independently from the rest of an organization.
- Provide advice and coaching to executives.
- When CEOs don't listen to the PR experts things can go very wrong.
- The PR department is a key resource in the development of a crisis management strategy and a crisis communications plan.
- A crisis communications plan leads to more sound problem-solving and decision-making.

Five Stages of a Crisis

1. Detection – looking for the warning signs
2. Prevention & preparation
3. Containment
4. Recovery
5. Learning



Detection

- Barton's prodromes
- As part of a communications management strategy, organizations should watch for prodromes to prevent a full-blown crisis.
- When an organization knows about a looming crisis ahead of the media and its stakeholders it is a huge advantage to managing the problem.
 - Draft statements
 - Prepare a news conference
 - Notify the crisis team
 - Call in spokespersons

Crisis prevention

- Public relations strategies and regular two-way communications build relationships.
- An open-door culture is a real advantage.
- What tactics and actions can an organization adopt to help prevent crises
- An organization must not only *do* what is right, it also also *tell* its stakeholders that it is doing so.
- Diligence, training and experts.
- Promptness is a virtue.

Crisis preparation

- Necessary for those crises that cannot be prevented.
- A crisis communications plan is the primary tool of preparedness. It should outline:
 - Role of each person
 - Who should be notified
 - How to contact key players
 - What to say, if anything, to stakeholders and the media

Containment

- The effort to limit the duration of the crisis or keep it from spreading to other areas of the organization

Recovery

- Involves efforts to return the company to business as usual and restore the confidence of key publics as soon as possible.
- Social responsibility.
 - Exxon as an example.
 - How can BP affect recovery and restore their image? What other groups should they be working with/on behalf of?

Learning

- The process of examining the crisis and determining what was lost, what was gained and how the organization performed throughout the crisis.
- Create an evaluation to make the crisis a prodrome for the future.
 - Example: Johnson & Johnson and tamper-proof bottles



Public opinion

- The “truth” is whatever public opinion says it is. Guilty until proven innocent.
- Most people are utterly disinterested in any given issue. PR is crucial to changing attitudes.
- Honesty is the best policy.
- The news media as a tool for changing public opinion.
- The worst case scenario. Are we ready?



THE END