Figure 13.8 **Japanese vs. American Crisis Management**

While this chapter has concentrated on American organizational crises, it is also important to consider how international organizations relate to crisis situations. One example comes from Japan and from U.S. crisis experts who are familiar with that culture.

Previous natural disasters, such as earthquakes, and bioterrorism attacks have displayed how the Japanese excellently plan and execute crisis responses. However, they have more difficulty in responding to other types of organizational security threats. This is especially true for Japanese companies working outside their homeland. Here are several of the reasons.

- Japanese company structures tend to be centralized, with limited supply chains (two or three suppliers, compared to 15 or 20 within American firms). This creates resource and political risks.
- Japanese corporate cultures do not encourage an openness that often allows "whistle-blowers" to warn others of organizational problems or misdeeds.
- Japanese companies rotate foreign-based employees quickly through many jobs and cultures. While this gives employees exposure, it also takes those most qualified to manage a crisis out of the situation at critical times.
- Japanese organizations tend to be more stoic and less empathetic than American firms. Following the 9-11 attacks, many American firms allowed employees to take time off or to alter work schedules. At the same time many Japanese employees in the United States were expected to be at work the day after the attack.
- Japanese companies tend to use consensus building in decision making. Yet decisions about crises and media requirements are often delayed until needed.

In this chapter we learned that a wise organization has a CMP and a crisis communication strategy in place as part of good crisis preparation. Japanese employees often find that when a crisis does occur, they have not thought through sample press releases or designation of a company spokesperson. As Chapter 14 will show, when a crisis hits and the press is knocking on your door, there is little time for seeking a consensus.

Source: Adapted from: "Japanese face special challenges when preparing for a crisis," and "Crisis management for Japanese companies in America." (n.d.). Danziger.com. Retrieved April 17, 2002, from **http://www.danziger.com/crisis_management.htm**.

proactive stance on crisis prevention. Following its first exposure with disaster in 1993, the company CMP was constantly updated and employees had regular evacuation practice sessions.[62]

On July 21, 1998, the town of Dearborn, Michigan, found out how important it is to practice for a disaster. In 1980 a severe storm left the town devastated for almost 15 days. But in the mid-1990s Dearborn city officials and private industry designed a disaster-recovery process. After 18 months of preparation they conducted one of the largest mock disaster efforts ever held in the United States. More than 25,000 people participated in the two-day event. Providentially the timing was perfect: When the 1998 storm hit, it killed three people and did more than $20 million in property damage. Afterward community officials were quick to note that the training helped emergency personnel and public and private security respond in a coordinated and effective manner that minimized confusion and brought the crisis to a speedy end.[63]

Revise the Plan

The useful life of a crisis plan is three or four years. Restructuring, new personnel, and new goals require its updating. Every three years the plan should be given a major revision. Yearly, human resources and operations departments should review it. Spokespeople and organizational leaders also change. That is why annual updates are recommended.

James E. Lukaszewski, past chairman of the Public Relations Society of America, lists five of the most important crisis communication plan updating procedures. While all are useful and encourage a contingent-thinking mentality, the first and last items should be ongoing:

- Ongoing preparation with annual simulations. An untested plan is an unworkable plan.
- Sharing critical crisis communication experience case studies.
- Useful right way/wrong way video-based, situation-specific refresher programs.
- Interpreting and packaging as case studies other organizations' crises in terms of how your organization might respond if faced with a similar difficulty.
- Crisis-prevention/exposure management processes as an ongoing threat-reduction activity.[64]

Ethical lapses by organizations sometimes lead to crises. At other times a totally ethical organization involved in a crisis may use unethical behavior in an attempt to end the crisis. Called, "a fascinating case study" by Walter Kiechel, editorial director for Harvard Business School Publishing, Figure 13.9 describes an episode on crisis management and perceived ethical breaches that was lived out by the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR). At the end of that case, management had the opportunity and obligation to rebuild the reputation of an established organization that failed to stop a crisis situation at its inception.

Figure 13.9 How the *Harvard Business Review* Failed to Respond to a Crisis

Founded in 1922, the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) refers to itself on its Web page as having "a proud tradition of being the world's preeminent business magazine." Although that fact is disputed by many in the academic and practical management field, the publication is the flagship of the Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation (HBSP), an organization that sells books, newsletters, business case studies, and conferences, and is a primary promoter of the Harvard Business School and its faculty.[1]

In fall 2001, HBR editor Suzy Wetlaufer conducted a series of interviews with then-recently retired General Electric (GE) Chairman Jack Welch. For years Welch had the reputation of being the greatest CEO ever. Indeed, during his tenure at GE the stock performance was unparalleled. The product of Wetlaufer's interviews was to be an article titled "Jack on Jack," scheduled for the HBR, February 2002, issue. In late December 2001, with the article in its final editing stages, Ms. Wetlaufer called Walter Kiechel, Editorial Director for Harvard Business School Publishing, and recommended the article be scrapped. Her reason? She had become too close to Welch during the interviews and writing, and that fact could give the appearance that the article was not objective.[2] As editorial director and manager of a large staff, Kiechel should have perceived the ethical and potential crisis issues. Yet he knew he could not kill the article because HBR had been promoting it. In early January 2002, he e-mailed the HBR staff explaining his scrapping of the original article and assigning it to two other HBR staffers. They reinterviewed Welch and rewrote the article that was published by the deadline.

Almost immediately after Kiechel's action, six top HBR editors wrote letters to him demanding Wetlaufer's resignation. At that point the HBR crisis had moved from its hidden stage to the pre-crisis mode. Kiechel needed to "act quickly and decisively to contain an emerging crisis . . . [and] to listen to concerns of the staff members closest to the situation."[3] As he listened Kiechel heard his staff describe how Wetlaufer "mixed her professional and personal life." Her colleagues believed she was "no longer able to lead the *Review*." Kiechel knew, "They're raising these concerns as a principled action, out of principled and courageous concern for the reputation of the *Review*." Colleagues believed Wetlaufer's actions were responsible, yet taken too late. They believed her real motivation was a phone call from Welch's wife after she had opened an e-mail between her husband and Wetlaufer, and the fear the entire episode could become public.[4] Still, Kiechel took no action against Wetlaufer. Instead he formed a task force to review policies governing ethics at HBR, and to consider changes in the ethics and conflict-of-interest policies. "The new policy will elucidate what kinds of relationships between interviewers and interviewees are appropriate and what kinds are not. We should make more explicit our policies on things like conflicts. One of my regrets is that I didn't get ahead of it."[5]

Figure 13.9 How the *Harvard Business Review* Failed to Respond to a Crisis (Continued)

Soon, news of the HBR quandary spread to other news organizations. The *Wall Street Journal* broke the story in a March 4 article, "Harvard Editor Faces Revolt Over Welch Story."[6] HBR was in the midst of a full crisis. Kiechel still had time to get ahead of the full storm, but instead his actions focused on quashing the leaks rather than stopping the crisis. At that point in a crisis there are many events and rumors fly. This became true at HBR.

- "Four days after the [*Wall Street*] *Journal* story appeared, Wetlaufer sent an e-mail to her staff announcing she was stepping down as editor. But, she said, she would remain at the magazine as a full-time editor-at-large."[7]
- That same day two senior editors resigned because Wetlaufer was not leaving. They said she would occupy the same office and write the same stories. According to one editor, Harris Collingwood, such compromises with reality are typical of HBSP's senior leadership." Alden Hayashi, the other editor, stated, "I didn't resign because of Suzy and Jack; I resigned because I lost faith in HBR's ability to do the right thing."[8]
- *The New York Times* blasted HBR for "writing an ethics code" in the middle of a scandal. "The biggest mistake people make . . . is trying to rewrite policies to solve last month's problem."[9] In the article resigned Senior Editor Harris Collingwood agreed. "I found the decision to write a code of ethics laughable because of the wide gap between the ethics the organization professes and the ethics it practices."[10]
- The credibility of HBR as an academic journal was questioned. Mark Pastin, in the *Wall Street Journal*, stated it was ironic that the crisis HBR started with was a "conflict of interest," when the magazine had long been "a house organ of the Harvard Business School offering itself as plain truth . . . [but] displaying a bias for HBS faculty."[11] The *Boston Globe* raised questions concerning the review's "editorial policy that allows subjects of the regularly featured HBR interview to review and modify their comments."[12] The *Globe* also raised other conflict-of-interest possibilities. Wetlaufer was a former Bain & Company consultant. In May 2001, HBR ran a self-congratulatory Bain-authored piece . . . [as] the lead article the same month Bain cosponsored the review's annual management conference on Cape Cod."[13]
- It was disclosed that Welch had played a major behind-the-scenes role in Wetlaufer's negotiated reassignment. He had recommended a GE lawyer and had phoned advice to Wetlaufer's legal team.[14]
- *Vanity Fair* and *New York* magazines ran exposés on Wetlaufer, allegedly linking her to other well-known CEOs. It also revealed that her behavior with Welch was part of a larger pattern of reckless behavior on her part. One issue, which HBR management had known but never addressed, was Wetlaufer's romantic relationship with a 22-year-old editorial assistant at the *Review*.[15]

Figure 13.9 How the *Harvard Business Review* Failed to Respond to a Crisis (Concluded)

On April 24, Wetlaufer resigned. While she might have survived any of the single controversies, it was the accumulation of events that took its toll. While her behavior as a journalist writing a news story was "conflict of interest," the story is really one of HBR management failing in its responsibility to its employees. Alden Hayashi, one of the resigned editors, credited Wetlaufer's work. "Suzy was on a journey to improve the magazine, but . . . she showed signs of being in trouble and she needed guidance from her bosses."[16] Harris Collingwood echoed the concern: "This whole drama could have been avoided if . . . senior management had done its job in the first place."[17]

The *Harvard Business Review* arrived at the post-crisis stage. The crisis issue died away and management started picking up the pieces, putting the organization back together, and repairing a damaged brand. Perhaps business school students of crisis management will one day study in the classroom a Harvard Business School case written about this. As Editorial Director Walter Kiechel described it, "It is a fascinating case study, but it will take a little while to detail the lessons."[18]

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Summary

This chapter has examined a need that every organization has: managing a crisis and crisis communication. A crisis is any event or activity that can bring harm and danger to the organization and its people. Communication needs are at the heart of all organizational crises. This chapter started with the case of Morgan Stanley and the World Trade Center attack. Because of a well-designed Crisis Management Plan and a well-thought-out communication strategy, only six MS employees lost their lives in the WTC tragedy. In addition MS's operations were uncompromised.

As an advanced business communication student, you will likely be involved in an organizational crisis some day. Other cases like those of Intel and Odwalla also showed that by knowing what to expect and do, you can help your organization survive the crisis and maintain its image and strength. We have learned from companies that have survived crises that management mind-sets constantly must be challenged. The lessons learned are these: There is more than one correct approach to solving a problem; subjective opinions do matter; emotional reactions to events must be assessed; and waiting is a decision that may have negative consequences.

Crises can be anticipated, prevented, controlled, and turned to an advantage. There are four stages that each crisis goes through: the hidden crisis, the pre-crisis, the actual crisis, and the post-crisis. There are specific actions that an organization must attend to in each stage. All of these actions are tied into a crisis-management process. This process has four steps: determining the crisis potential, developing appropriate crisis teams and centers, writing a crisis-management plan, and developing a communication strategy. While each is important, developing the crisis-management plan and a communication strategy are critical.

After having walked through the crisis-management plan and communication strategy, in Chapter 14 you will be introduced to a proactive process you can follow in developing a working relationship with the media.

Discussion Questions

1. In your general observation of the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, what is your impression of the way that leaders of various organizations managed the crisis event? What stood out as some of the most effective acts, and what were some of the most ineffective? Who were the true crisis managers?
2. Early in this chapter the four basic crisis theses were described. How do you interpret the use of each thesis as the leaders of our nation prepare for possible future terrorist attacks? How about local leaders in your community and organizations?
3. Media reports regarding organizations that are involved in crises seem to always be in the news. Using recent reports from your local media describe a local organization, and determine in which of the four stages of a crisis the organization finds itself.
4. Pick a familiar local campus or business organization. Assume that organization has never considered the crisis-management process. Using the

four steps of crisis management, what are some things that organization should immediately consider?

5. Refer to the different case examples in this chapter. In relation to their crisis-communication strategy, which emerge as the most effective actions and the most ineffective actions? What specific changes would you have made if you had been in control of the communication process?
6. Considering the crises reported in this chapter, and those you remember from recent media reports, what are the ethical issues? How do the ethical issues relate to crisis management? Do ethical lapses cause most crises? Do crises naturally bring ethical quandaries? Explain.

Communication in Action

1. This chapter identified reasons management should respond quickly and correctly to crisis events. The case in Figure 13.9 revealed how the manager of one organization failed the "quickness" and "correctness" tests in a case that identified how ethical issues were at the heart of the crisis. If you have difficulty in identifying the issues, check out the following Web sites and determine what the journalism ethics code and principles would say about conflict of interest and mixing one's personal and professional lives. The Society of Professional Journalists' "Code of Ethics" is found at **http://www.spj.org/ethics.asp**. Look especially at the areas of "Act Independently" and "Be Accountable." The second site is from the American Society of Newspaper Editors, **http://www.asne.org/index.cfm?ID=886**. Under "Statement of Principles" examine Articles III and V. Finally, go to the Society of American Business Editors and Writers' site: **http://www.sabew.org/**. From its homepage click on "About SABEW," "SABEW Info," and then "Codes of Ethics." Listed under "Dow Jones," paragraphs 7 and 8 deal specifically with managers' leadership responsibility to follow and to impart to employees appropriate ethical conduct.
   Your Assignment: Write a short analysis of the case as it relates to the chapter. Describe the correct procedures that you would have followed had you been the manager of the *Harvard Business Review*. Be prepared to discuss the case and your analysis in the classroom.
2. Videotape an investigative story from a news program like *20/20, 60 Minutes, Dateline, or Frontline* that covers a recent crisis in an organization. With some of your classmates, analyze the program and discuss how successful or unsuccessful the organization was in managing its crisis. Make note of the reporter's behavior and write down some questions or concerns you have about media interviews that you would like to see answered as your read and discuss Chapter 14, "Media Management."

@ Internet

3. You have a job in your campus library working for the director. Recently your director went to a library conference and attended a session on disaster

plans for libraries. While there she realized the current library disaster plan does not have a recovery format section for photographs. She is suddenly troubled because the library was recently given a very large and valuable collection of photographs from a landmark department store. Your director gives you a Web site, **http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/bytopic/disasters/plans/**, and asks you to review the "photograph" section of the campus library disaster plans.

Your Assignment: Review a few of the libraries' photograph disaster-recovery plans posted on the Web site. Develop an outline of the critical areas that you believe your director should consider. Send your outline to the director with a memo as the cover page. In your memo also include a few names of data-recovery companies that you found and reviewed while surveying the different sites. Be ready to discuss your findings in the classroom.

4. While reading this crisis-management chapter and searching the Internet for research materials, you found that several fast-food restaurants have experienced crises. Consequently you have a growing concern for a family member who owns a small chain of hamburger restaurants in a large metroplex community. You have shared your concern with your instructor who gave you a Web site to review: **http://www.e911.com/monos/A001.html**. At the site you found a wonderful case summary of a crisis at the fictional BurgerMax chain. You have told your family member about your findings. He is extremely interested, but doesn't have time to read a long case analysis. He asks you to prepare a short review of the case with questions he should consider as he applies your review to his chain. Prepare your two- or three-page review, with questions.

InfoTrac

5. Much of our learning about crisis management occurs as we observe the way that organizations actually manage real crises. Listed below are the cases of several actual organizational crises. The cases are listed by general areas of crisis emphasis.

   Your Assignment: Select one of the cases listed below. As you read the case create answers to the following questions:

   1. What took place in the various stages of the organization's crisis?
   2. How did the organization manage the crisis?
   3. What communication strategy did the organization use? Was it effective?
   4. What did the managers of the organization learn about crisis management as a result of the incident?

   After you have read the case and have answered the questions, write a short case analysis. Take it to class and be prepared to share in a general discussion about cases of organizational crises.

   Crisis Management:

   "Developing the Three Levels of Learning in Crisis Management: A Case Study of the Hagersville Tire Fire," by Laurent Simon and Thierry C. Pauchant, in *Review of Business*, Fall 2000, Article No. A73183461.

Communication Strategy:

"Exploring the Boundaries of Crisis Communication: The Case of the 1997 Red River Valley Flood," by Donald A. Fishman, *Communication Studies*, Summer 2001, Article No. A80163313.

"Firestone's Failed Recalls, 1978 and 2000: A Public Relations Explanation," by Dirk C. Gibson, in *Public Relations Quarterly*, Winter 2000, Article No. A71565409.

"Integrating Public Relations and Legal Responses During a Crisis: The Case of Odwalla, Inc." by Kathleen A. Martinelli and William Briggs, in *Public Relations Review*, Winter 1998, Article No. A54116097.

"ValuJet Flight 592: Crisis Communication Theory Blended and Extended," by Donald A. Fishman, *Communication Quarterly*, Fall 1999, Article No. A67151733. Note that this case uses Fink's framework that was referenced earlier in the chapter. The author directly links ethics and crises by suggesting that a crisis situation always threatens important values.

Organizational Image:

"A Critical Analysis of US Air's Image Repair Discourse," by William L. Benoit and Anne Czerwinski, in *Business Communication Quarterly*, Fall 1997, Article No. A20041315.

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E R - 14

Media Management

While most of the communication skills of business executives are used within the business community, social issues and crises often require executives to communicate with the public through the media. Learning to work quickly and efficiently with the news media—when the situation is positive or negative—is the mark of an effective organization's communication-management program. Both the print and broadcast media have considerable power. However, a 1997 poll by The Center for Media and Public Affairs revealed that 86 percent of all Americans receive most of their information from local television news shows, while 80 percent use national shows and 77 percent use newspapers.[1]

Businesses have traditionally mistrusted the various media; however, the dramatic increase in business reporting by the media and a continuing effort by business to initiate reports during the past two decades have forced many companies to improve their ability to use the media to their advantage. The relatively recent phenomenon of the major crisis, such as product-tampering, has also emphasized the importance of a business/media relationship. Yet surprisingly, many upper-level executives still find themselves ill-prepared to meet with and talk to the press under any condition.

We want you to feel comfortable with media representatives and to be ready when your call from a reporter arrives. This chapter is designed to get you ready by examining how organizations communicate with media personnel. The chapter is divided into five parts: First we will describe how companies use press releases to gain attention for their personnel, products, and business. Part Two describes how to apply the organization's communication strategy in times of crisis. Parts Three through Five discuss media interviews and good performance techniques to use.

Inviting Media Response: The Press Release

One of the best ways to attract the media is to understand the types of material that editors use in noncrisis times. Companies always want to obtain media coverage that promotes their personnel, products, policies, and programs. But the media seek only current and genuine *news* about executive changes, emergencies, litigation, and key issues. Editors are especially desirous of covering unfavorable issues or subjects embarrassing to a company. With these two apparently different objectives, how does your company get its good news to the media and minimize the damage that bad news may represent? The answer is: the press release.

While the press release is a standard public relations [illegible] prepared, delivered, and used properly. There are [illegible] business features, consumer service features, [illegible] and pictorial features. Journalists can obtain [illegible] instant thanks to the Internet. This means that [illegible] companies need to have a global communications awareness.[2]

While most press releases are handled by a company's public relations office, you as a manager should be familiar with the format and character of releases. In a large company you may be required to supply copy for such a release. In a small company you may prepare your own release or respond to the media follow-up. Writing a good press release is the first step toward making your organization proactive in its media approach.

Rules to Follow in Preparing Press Releases

The ten rules that follow will give you an overview of how to prepare a press release.

Know the Media Outlets and Their Audience

Andrea Brooks, real-estate columnist for *The New York Times*, gives the following insider's view of press releases: While she tries to read every release that she receives, the reading is often only a scan. "I know within 30 seconds if it's worth reading in depth."[3] Scott Wenger, business editor of the *New York Daily News*, gives releases much less time. He receives over 500 faxes, letters, e-mails, and phone calls a day. If he allowed a 30-second read it would take four hours of his workday. He gives each review four seconds max. His number-one rule is: "Know the publication and its readers; then cut to the chase in no more than two pages—preferably one."[4]

To do this requires you to stay current on publications and reporters who do report on your type of business or service, and to know the types of articles and stories they want and need. According to Wenger only five percent of the releases he receives are really usable.

Present News That Is Real News

Reporters are interested in news, not in reading an advertisement for your business or products. What makes for real news? Generally news is something that is different or unusual—something that people do not already know. It solves problems or fulfills needs. This is one reason why bad news always finds an open ear with the media. Commercial airplanes fly thousands of trips a day. That is not news. When an airline crashes that is truly news. According to Beard and Dalton, a manager has to work hard to find real news in ordinary information.

> [You] have to search hard for a fresh angle that will give your story the proper appeal or "spin." This can be done by focusing on things like market share data, price comparisons, an outstanding statistic, or other numbers that play up the uniqueness, size, or quality of your company or product(s). . . . Any of these types of things may be considered newsworthy, although it all really boils down to the timing and perceived value of such pronouncements.[5]

Figure 14.1 displays a press release from US Airways announcing the creation of an online mileage-purchase program. For those who fly US Air, and for merchants

Figure 14.1 **Press Release by US Airways**

US AIRWAYS

Home Contact Us Search & Index

usairways.com

- Reservations
- Timetables
- Dividend Miles
- Promotions

About US

- Corporate Information
- Press Releases
- Employment
- Investor Relations
- Aircraft

About US Airways

US AIRWAYS LAUNCHES ONLINE MILEAGE PURCHASE PROGRAM WHERE CUSTOMERS CAN BUY MILES THROUGH USAIRWAYS.COM

ARLINGTON, Va., May 17, 2002 -- US Airways and Points.com are making it easier for Dividend Miles members to purchase miles through a new online Mileage Purchase Program on **usairways.com**.

Dividend Miles members can take advantage of the online Mileage Purchase Program to buy miles for personal use or as a gift for others. A member can purchase up to 15,000 miles per Dividend Miles account per year. Access to this service is available through **usairways.com** or via a direct link to **buydividendmiles.points.com**.

This new online feature complements the current Mileage Purchase Program where members can purchase miles toward award travel or gifts by calling US Airways.

With the online service, members can purchase Dividend Miles at 3 cents per mile, which includes the 7.5 percent federal excise tax (Canadian members pay additional sales tax). Miles are available in increments of 1,000 miles with a minimum 2,000-mile purchase requirement. Now through June 15, 2002, US Airways will waive the $25 processing fee. These miles will be credited to the member's Dividend Miles account within 72 hours of making the purchase.

"Dividend Miles continue to make great gifts, and this program will help make it easier for members to offer a gift of travel for family and friends, or even themselves," said Stephen M. Usery, US Airways vice president of marketing and revenue management. "We even will send a personalized e-mail message to the recipient notifying them of the gift."

With Dividend Miles, a standard Coach Class award ticket requires only 20,000 miles for travel in the U.S. and Canada during the off-peak period between Sept. 15, and the last day of February. Peak period travel requires 25,000 miles in the U.S. and Canada.

The number of miles needed for European off-peak award travel is 40,000, with 50,000 miles needed for standard European peak Economy Class travel between May 1 and Sept. 30.

US Airways, the US Airways Express carriers and US Airways Shuttle provide service to 203 destinations worldwide, including 38 states in the U.S., Antigua, Aruba, Barbados, Bermuda, Cancun, Cozumel, Freeport, Grand Cayman, Montego Bay, Nassau, San Juan, Santo Domingo, St. Lucia, St. Thomas, St. Maarten, and St. Croix. US Airways Express also serves North Eleuthera, Governors Harbour, Marsh Harbour and Treasure Cay from Florida. In Canada,
US Airways serves Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. US Airways' European destinations are Amsterdam, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Manchester, Munich, Paris and Rome.

Points.com's proprietary technology platform offers a portfolio of innovative solutions for the loyalty program industry. Points.com solutions forges mutually rewarding partnerships with the world's leading loyalty players to deliver unique and compelling value propositions. Based in Toronto, Points.com is the wholly owned operating subsidiary of Exclamation International Incorporated. Exclamation shares trade on the TSX Venture Exchange under the stock symbol XI. More information is available at www.exclamation.com and www.points.com.

For additional information on US Airways' Mileage Purchase Program, contact the Dividend Miles Service Center at 1-336-661-8390, or visit US Airways online at **usairways.com**.

Reporters needing additional information should contact US Airways Corporate Communications at (703) 872-5100.

Source: Reprinted by permission of US Airways.

who have businesses in the US Airways market, this is valuable information. The release is upbeat and explains the entire program. Because this and figures that follow in this chapter were designed for company Web sites, some of the information in the press release guide, Figure 14.6 on page 372, does not appear.

The News Must Have a Local Interest

If there is no hometown angle or local discussion of a headquarters, plant, dealership, or other interest, the release will not be used. The media's need for local information is critical because international, national, and regional coverage is usually obtained by wire and syndicated services.[6] Of course, some of your company's news may impact the financial market both locally and internationally. Figure 14.2 is an example of a press release aimed at a narrow audience. Local media presented this information to the citizens of San Diego.

Use the Direct Message Approach

As your high school English teacher told you, a good news article discusses the who, what, why, when, where, and how. A good press release answers those same questions as briefly as possible in the first two paragraphs. Apply the same direct message approach that was discussed in Chapter 5. That approach called for leading with the most positive information, and then following with the next-most-positive information, and the next-most-positive, and so on, until the message is complete. This usually means following the journalistic or inverted-pyramid style discussed in Chapter 9 on report writing. As Christopher Brooks, news editor at the *Journal of Commerce* in Newark, New Jersey, states, "Don't bury the lead down at the bottom . . . because I won't get that far if I don't see a point."[7] The release in Figure 14.3 violates this rule. While the heading describes the information that should be contained in the release, that news is buried in the fourth paragraph. As you read this release, what other violations do you notice?

Figure 14.4 uses the direct approach, and also applies other general rules for press releases. Use active, energetic verbs while avoiding adjectives. Never use words not used in everyday conversation. Avoid long, drawn-out sentence structure. Sentences should be short, definite, and have no more than one thought contained in each. The same rules also apply to paragraphs. They should be no longer than two or three sentences and, similar to the sentence, should carry the same idea or thought process. The point is to make it as easy as possible for the reader to understand and comprehend.

Avoid Buzzwords, Acronyms, and Jargon

Avoiding company or industry jargon and technical talk will help readers understand your news quickly. For example, doctors when addressing both patients and the media automatically use medical terms that are common to their trade, yet uncommon to a layperson. Putting those terms into plain language helps in communicating the real content. Examples are: Angina: chest pain or pressure; Glottis: opening between the vocal cords; Hidrosis: sweating; Migrainous cranial neuralgia: a cluster headache or a variation of migraine headache; Otitis: ear infection; and Septicemia: blood poisoning.[8]

Figure 14.2 **Example of a Press Release Aimed at a Narrow Audience**

San Diego Blood Bank
A Regional Blood Center

December 18, 1998

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lynn Stedd, 296-6393, x237
or Faith Saculles, 296-6393, x283

SAN DIEGO BLOOD BANK "UNWRAPS" A GIFT TO THE COMMUNITY – A NEW NBC 7/39 BLOODMOBILE DESIGN IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS

At 1 pm on Wednesday, December 23, the San Diego Blood Bank at 440 Upas Street, will "unwrap" a gift to the community: a colorful, bigger-than-life design on the NBC 7/39 Bloodmobile.

The bold new "buswrap" features the smiling faces of a dozen San Diego Blood Bank donors. Among them: Commander Bill Flores of the San Diego Sheriff's Department, who donated bone marrow to a patient in need in 1995 and has since been instrumental in recruiting hundreds of Latinos to the National Marrow Donor Program registry; and "Super Donors" Greg Mullendore of Mira Mesa, a CHP officer who has made 244 donations of blood components, and Luther Babers III of North Bay Terraces, who has made 60 donations of blood components. Photos of Frank Basset of Carmel Mountain Ranch, Sarah Hedrick of University City, Angela Murphy of Oak Park, Angie Ortanez of Scripps Ranch, David Park of Poway, Rebecca Parks of Rancho Penasquitos , Diane Roberson of Lemon Grove, Eva Rodriguez of La Mesa, and Christine Stepanian of Rancho Bernardo also grace the "wrap."

"Every inch of the bloodmobile is wrapped in this wonderful design to show San Diegans that donors come in all "types" -- all shapes, sizes, colors, and ages and from all heritages," says Lynn Stedd, community relations director of the San Diego Blood Bank. "We hope the new wrap will grab people's attention and remind them to share their health and give the gift of life."

Lar Kress, of Lar Kress Advertising and Design, and Robert Bruni of Ambience Photography, donated their time to create the bloodmobile wrap; 3M contributed more than $3,000 in materials; San Diego Transit contributed space for the wrap to be completed. Michele Prado, Supergraphics, and Elaine Dill also shared their expertise. For more information, please call 619-296-6393.

###

San Diego Blood Bank • 440 Upas St • San Diego • 92103 • 296-6393 • **No. County Donor Center** • 1340 W. Valley Pkwy • Escondido • 92029 • 489-0621
No. Coastal Donor Center • 161 Thunder Dr • Vista • 92083 • 945-1906 • **East County Donor Center** • 680 Fletcher Pkwy • El Cajon • 92020 • 441-1804
South Bay Donor Center • 1717 Sweetwater Rd • National City • 91950 • 336-4090

Source: Reprinted by permission of San Diego Blood Bank.

Figure 14.3 **Example of a Press Release That Buries the Lead**

The White House
President George W. Bush

For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
May 10, 2002

National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week, 2002
By the President of the United States of America
A Proclamation

The importance of America's transportation system became evident to all Americans on September 11, 2001. Airliners were diverted, airports closed, and travelers were stranded for days as transportation systems across the country were disrupted. In the aftermath of September 11, the men and women in the transportation industry have helped restore function and trust to a system that was traumatized. Today, Americans and America's goods and services are being more safely moved to their destinations, as our communities continue the process of important restructuring.

We have helped secure our transportation system with the passage of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act, which greatly enhanced the protections for America's passengers and goods. And we are determined to ensure that Americans have the transportation system and mobility that is necessary for a vibrant economy and meaningful quality of life.

We live in a time of unprecedented travel, when goods and services, regardless of origin, can be available in a short amount of time. Thanks to imagination, innovation, and investment in transportation, we can safely commute to work, receive overnight mail, buy fresh fruit and vegetables, and travel with relative ease to destinations around the world. We also continue to make progress in developing a transportation system that offers choices and protects the environment through cleaner, more fuel-efficient vehicles and new, environmentally sound infrastructure.

To recognize Americans who work in transportation and who contribute to our Nation's prosperity, defense, and progress, the United States Congress, by joint resolution approved May 16, 1957, as amended, (36 U.S.C. 120), has designated the third Friday in May of each year as "National Defense Transportation Day," and, by joint resolution approved May 14, 1962, as amended, (36 U.S.C. 133), declared that the week during which that Friday falls be designated as "National Transportation Week."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim Friday, May 17, 2002, as National Defense Transportation Day and May 12 through May 18, 2002, as National Transportation Week. I encourage all Americans to recognize how our modern transportation system has enhanced our economy and contributed to our freedom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of May, in the year of our Lord two thousand two, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-sixth.

GEORGE W. BUSH

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Return to this article at:
http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020510-6.html

Source: Retrieved from **http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/05/20020510-6.html.**

Carrying it a step further, avoid using buzzwords. BuzzWhack.com's definition of a buzzword is: "A usually important sounding word or phrase used primarily to impress laypersons." Clichés abound in the business world. Words like *breakthrough, cutting edge, state of the art*, or *enterprise-wide* are common business lingo, but they drive journalists nuts. As John Walston of Buzzwhack.com states, "'Solutions' is a buzzword, but mainly because it is overused and abused. Is your company a solutions provider? Of course they are. Otherwise no one would buy from you. So there's little to gain by claiming to be one."[9]

Figure 14.4 Example of a Press Release Using the Direct Message Approach

MADD

Activism | Victim Services | Education

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MARCH 21, 2002

Contact: Misty Moyse, 214-744-6233
Tresa Hardt, 214-744-6233

MADD SAYS NBC PULLING LIQUOR ADS IS BAND-AID APPROACH, STRICTER STANDARDS NEEDED FOR ALL ALCOHOL ADVERTISING

Organization Calls for Congressional Hearings, Releases New Policy Recommendations and Survey Showing Public Support

Washington, D.C. – Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) says the NBC Television Network's reversal of its decision to air liquor ads misses the big picture and the need for stricter responsibility standards for *all* alcohol advertising, including ads for beer, wine, liquor, and malt-based beverages. Today, at a Washington, D.C., news conference, MADD and U.S. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-CA, called for immediate congressional hearings to examine this issue and alcohol advertising's effect on youth and underage drinking. MADD also released its new policies on alcohol advertising and urged NBC and other television networks to adopt these guidelines.

Among the top priorities of the new policies announced by MADD:

- Restrictions on all television alcoholic beverage advertising – including ads for beer, wine, liquor, and malt-based beverages – so as to limit the exposure to underage viewers.
- Requirements for a matching amount and comparable placement of air time/ad space for alcohol-related public health and alcohol-related safety messages for young people and adults. A government agency or an independent agency or public health experts not affiliated with the alcohol industry must produce these counter-ads.

Americans back MADD's stance according to a public opinion poll where a majority (60.1 percent) of respondents said they would support stricter policies or responsibility standards for all alcohol advertising on television, including ads for liquor, beer, and wine. An overwhelming 93.5 percent of respondents said they would support television advertising to promote health and safety messages related to underage drinking and drunk driving. The public opinion survey released by MADD was conducted by RoperASW.

Figure 14.4 **Example of a Press Release Using the Direct Message Approach (Concluded)**

"MADD is not against alcohol advertising; we simply want standards in place that will protect our children from constant exposure and messages that directly appeal to them," said Wendy Hamilton, MADD national president elect. "NBC and the other television networks are giving the beer and wine industry a free pass when it comes to advertising. All should be held to the same standards, as alcohol is alcohol — a 12 ounce can of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, a 12 ounce wine cooler, or 1 1/2 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits all contain the same amount of absolute alcohol."

U.S. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, D-CA, backed MADD's positions and also called for Congress to hold hearings on this important issue. "Young people are already bombarded with messages promoting alcohol consumption. With this constant daily exposure to alcohol marketing, it's no wonder that over 10 million kids under the age of 21 consume alcohol, and that the average age at which children start to drink is now just 13 years old," said Roybal-Allard. "MADD's tough new standards for alcohol advertising would go a long way towards countering the considerable influence alcohol advertising has on our nation's youth."

Mothers Against Drunk Driving is a grassroots organization with approximately 600 chapters nationwide. MADD's mission is to stop drunk driving, support the victims of this violent crime, and prevent underage drinking. For more information about MADD or its alcohol advertising policies, visit www.madd.org or call 1-800-GET-MADD.

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Source: Reprinted by permission of Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

Figure 14.5 is difficult to read and understand because it violates many of the suggestions made in this point. Use your current understanding of press releases, and the knowledge you have gathered about editing, and rewrite the following release to flow more smoothly and to present a clearer description.

Include All Required Mechanical Elements

Reporters look for several specific mechanical elements in a press release. To better ensure that your release will be used, include all these elements. You can use Figure 14.6, "Press Release Guide," to prepare your future releases.

Most large organizations put their releases on company letterhead to present all the vital company information and to add credibility. In the upper-left corner put the date of release and any restrictions on when the notice can be made public. If, for example, you are announcing a new product, but do not want that information to be made public until April 10, include the restriction, "For release after April 10." This type of restriction is called an *embargo*. If there are no date restrictions, mark the release "For immediate release." Occasionally a publication will break an embargo. In that instance other publications may do the same. If your material is time-sensitive, hold the release until the day that you want it released, and then fax it. Add "Pictures available" if you have them.

Figure 14.5 **Example of a Press Release That Needs Editing**

Page 1 of 2

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

July 1, 1998

Contact Gary Hodge, Vice President
+1 713 784 1880;
hodge@posc.org

MEMBERS ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT POSC EVOLUTION

Houston, TX -- The Board of Directors of the Petrotechnical Open Software Corporation (POSC) reaffirmed the POSC goal of an integrated, seamless technical software environment, based on open specifications spanning the life cycle of E&P oil and gas fields. The Board also approved an evolutionary change in POSC's governance and operations to ensure ultimate achievement of the vision. The drivers of the change are two-fold:

- to evolve POSC to the original vision of a sustainable membership organization and
- to create a funding model based on value received.

The governance transition will occur over the next three years, with the composition of the Board changing to reflect the composition of the membership. The funding changes are to be achieved by broadening the range of uniquely funded activities to include not only the traditional development and maintenance of technical specifications but also the provision of professional services to support widespread commercial deployment of products, services, and data based on the specifications.

Board Chairman Bob Pindell summarized the actions as "POSC making fundamental changes that are in line with the original charter to become a self-sustaining membership organization, independent of sponsorship."

Members Express Their Support

In response to these changes, representatives of the former sponsor companies of POSC issued the following statement: "We wish to affirm our continued support for the vision of E&P technical software built on open specifications and to encourage others in the industry to do the same. Products and services that use open standards are generally preferable to those based on proprietary specifications. We will continue to encourage industry participants to build and use open specifications in their software applications. Additionally POSC, its staff, and member community represent an open mechanism for companies to work together to solve business problems. We support initiatives that leverage the work of the POSC community and that bring the industry closer to realization of the vision. We support membership and participation in POSC and E&P standards organizations because adopting open standards benefits the entire industry."

When the changes were discussed by the membership at large, David Zeh, CEO of Zeh Graphic Systems, expressed his enthusiasm: "My company joined as the very first POSC member because I believed, and still believe, in the POSC concepts and the need for industry standards. These changes reflect a move in the right direction with the governance of POSC becoming more equitably distributed to all members – oil companies and service companies alike."

The sentiment of many members was captured by Larry Bellomy of Mobil when he explained his company's views on POSC, "Mobil believes in the POSC effort to bring open specifications to E&P

computing and will continue to be a member of POSC. We will also continue to support selected POSC programs that support Mobil's technology direction and provide value-added benefits. We are not abandoning the effort, but believe it is time for POSC to stand on its own as a member-driven organization as was originally intended. We look forward to, and fully support, the continued transition of POSC as outlined in the business plan developed by the POSC staff."

Bob Pindell added the Texaco perspective: "Texaco has successfully deployed the POSC specifications in certain of our operations. As such, we fully support this evolutionary step to a sustainable, member-driven organization, and look forward to the continued deployment of POSC specifications in our industry. The use of open specifications can be a tremendous aid in effectively managing E&P assets by assuring access to the best technologies."

POSC CEO David Archer noted: "We are encouraged by the industry's movement toward widespread usage of the POSC specifications and services and by positive reactions to the current changes. Strong support will allow us to establish an identity as a trusted source for skills relating to information modeling, information sharing and integration, and as THE place to go for collaborative work relating to information sharing in E&P. When people want to work together in an open environment to solve a common E&P business problem, we want them to instinctively think of POSC. Our approach leverages risk, capital and people to arrive at quality collaborative solutions."

POSC is an international, not-for-profit, membership organization that was founded in 1990 to develop data and technical computing specifications for the E&P segment of the oil industry. POSC specifications are designed to enable the oil industry to deal with problems of integrating and sharing data over the life cycle of E&P assets. With a worldwide membership of more than 100 organizations, POSC has headquarters in Houston and an office in London. The membership includes oil and gas companies, oilfield service companies, software and hardware companies, government agencies, and educational institutions.

For more information about POSC, please visit our website at http://www.posc.org

- -

If you have questions about this announcement, please contact:

POSC
Gary Hodge, Vice President and CFO
Tel: (713) 784-1880
Fax: (713) 784-9219
hodge@posc.org

Updated: July 1, 1998. Send questions and comments to webmaster@posc.org

Source: Reprinted by permission of Petrotechnical Open Software Corporation.

Figure 14.6 **Press Release Guide**

Company letterhead with logo

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: **Name(s)**
Address
Telephone number
Fax number
E-mail address
Web site address

HEADLINE GOES HERE IN ALL UPPERCASE LETTERS

(leave an inch of space)

City, State, Date—use a "most important news first" approach. The first paragraph should always give the who, what, where, when, why, and how.

Second and following paragraphs should contain relevant information on people, products, or services. Include advantages, benefits, and uniqueness. Important quotes from management, customers, experts, or others with credibility should be added.

Overall, content should be short, one page preferred with a maximum of two pages. Ideally this means around 300 words.

-more-
or
continued on page 2 (if you have two or more pages)

Abbreviated Headline (page 2) at the top of each additional page.

Remainder of text

Company Summary (one brief but compact paragraph with information about

company history, products, sevices, location, and other relevant information.

If you would like more information about this topic call (person) at (number) or email (person) at (e-mail address).

###

(at the end of the review)

In the upper-right corner place the name of the contact person along with title, name of company (if not in the letterhead), address, both telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address, and Web site URL. Some managers place a nighttime cell phone number for emergency calls, because journalists work unusual hours. Some organizations place the contact information at the bottom of the release, especially if there are several contact individuals.

Headlines and subheads are technically optional. Editors prefer headlines—at the top of the page so they can tell at a glance what the story is about. The headline must contain the essence of the report. Use the subhead to further build and advance the title words. Avoid promotional and sales words, because reporters are not interested in helping you sell products. They want to convey useful information to their audiences. The heading should be in all capital letters. Because editors often want to rewrite or edit your heading, it is best to leave a good inch of space between the contact information and the heading.

The content of your release backs up and adds more information to the heading. The first paragraph is the most critical. Using the journalistic approach, apply the who, what, where, when, why, and how statements. The remainder of the text supports the heading and adds more useful information. Put all of your information in priority order, most important first. Editors love "quotable quotes" or comments that stand out in originality or strength. Try to use these in your writing.

Strive to limit the release to one page. If your release is more than one page in length, add the word *-more-* or *-continued-* at the bottom of the page. At the top of the next page place a *slug line*: a one-or-two word title that summarizes the subject. Example: New Store Opens! Always complete the paragraph on one page and never carry it over to the next page. At the end of the press release, let the editor know you're finished by centering and typing "# # #, –30-," or "ends," which signifies "the end." Below that symbol give the name and telephone number of the person to contact if more information is desired.

Most editors like to see a press release typed and double-spaced on standard, single-sided, letter-sized paper. Leave 1- to 1½-inch margins on the sides for the editor to use in placing notes or in editing. Use bold headings to draw attention.

The Appearance Must Be Flawless

The appearance of the press release is critical. Editors and other readers rely on their first impressions. If the appearance is not exactly as the editor prescribes, the article will not have the first line read. Just like a résumé, if there is one spelling error, grammatical error, or untidy appearance, the chances of being successful are almost zero. The document must be flawless.

Determine Whether to Send the Release Yourself or Through a Service

If your target market is small, you can probably afford to send out your own releases, but you should have knowledge of media representatives who cover companies within your industry. You should also have a list of local media contacts that was completed in the assembling of the Crisis Management Plan. One way to collect media names is to make a list of writers' names and contact information that you find as you read trade magazines and observe local and surrounding media reports. From a local perspective list all television, radio, and newspapers. Include the weekly, monthly, and even throwaway-type papers available in every community.

One of the biggest advantages of preparing your own media list is the ability to narrowly tailor that list. Another advantage is the cost savings. Yet, it is often difficult to carve out the time to collect the proper names, and to constantly keep your data list current. Journalists seem to be more receptive to releases that come from a source that they recognize, such as a public relations firm. Press-release services also stay up to date on the particular likes and dislikes of individual journalists. If you do decide to purchase a media list from many of the list companies that have them available, check them out with the following questions.

- What contact information is included (things like address, e-mail, fax, or preferences)?
- How often are the names updated? When was the last update?
- How specific is the list?
- How was the list compiled?
- How many times can you use the list?
- How much time will you have to devote to cleaning and updating the list?[10]

For a sample of some of the online press release services check out the following Web sites: **http://www.press-release-writing.com/**; **http://www.ereleases.com/**; **http://www.mediazapper.com**; **http://www.onlinepressrelease.com/**; and **http://www.expresspress.com**.

Make Your Press Releases Web-Friendly

As you prepare your press releases, keep in mind that the power of your releases can go beyond the general media outlets. By optimizing your releases for search engines you can get added benefit for the present and into the future. Keep key words and key phrases in mind. Use the words several times within the content of your release. After your release has been created, learn the proper way to submit it to search engines for indexing. This is especially true for search engines like Google and Yahoo that have designated areas for press releases. The benefit of using search engines is: "Your news will be available to journalists and consumers long after the initial release. However, before sending the release to both the media and Web search engines, make sure you have posted it to your own Web site."[11]

Customize Your Release to Different Media

Instead of sending a standard release to each media representative, consider customizing it to meet each representative's specific needs and format. A news magazine looks for an entirely different story than does *The Wall Street Journal* or a trade publication. Normally the major changes will occur in a rewriting of the first paragraph. Wayne Green—founder and publisher of some 27 magazines, including *Byte* and *CD Review*—indicates that he would have encouraged his employees to make three versions of the press release critiques in Figure 14.7: one each for the retail, music, and publishing industries.[12]

A Critique of a Press Release

The example in Figure 14.7 comes from a story in *Inc* magazine. The release was issued by an employee of Green's company, an $8-million magazine and music distributorship in Hancock, New Hampshire. The critique is Green's view of the release.[13]

Figure 14.7 **Critique of a Press Release**

WGE PUBLISHING

Forest Road Hancock, NH 03449-0278 603-525-4201 FAX: 603-525-4423

Contact Grace Cohen at:
1-800-722-7785

For Immediate Release:

Publisher Introduces Custom Music Magazine Rack For Retailers

CD REVIEW Magazine is introducing their new "Eight Pocket Rack Program" at SCES. The attractive, custom-designed spinner is a new way for the retailers to sell music and entertainment magazines. The rack creates maximum impact while using a minimal, 1½ square feet of floor space, and is free to retailers participating in the program. Retail outlets will be able to choose from a wide variety of magazines, customizing the mix of their particular demographics. Some of the titles available include *CD REVIEW, Details, Option, Musician, Electronic Musician, Ear, Country Music, Spin,* and *Jazziz.*

Additional benefits, other than customizing product mix, include one-step billing and an affidavit program to simplify credits. Billing for all eight publications will be handled with a single statement by *CD REVIEW's* parent company, WGE Publishing. Instead of returning unsold issues for credit, retailers will attest to the number of remaining copies by affidavit. Title allotment will be monitored to maintain highest possible sales for the retail outlet. This procedure will cut the time stores usually spend processing returns to almost nothing. Retailers will make a full 40% on each magazine sold, with an absolute minimum effort.

For additional information, please contact Retail Circulation Manager Phil Martus at 1-800-722-7785.

Figure 14.7 Critique of a Press Release (Concluded)

USE YOUR OWN LETTERHEAD
"If you use a public relations agency, supply it with your company's letterhead. If editors have to call an agency first, they might not bother calling at all."

FORMAT NOTES
"There's no date here. A press release should always be dated. You want to give editors a sense of timeliness and urgency and also let them know when to call to do a follow-up."

MAKE SURE YOUR CONTACT PEOPLE ARE INFORMED AND HELPFUL
"The name at the top of the release should be the person you want contacted. This should be someone who is fully informed about every aspect of your product or service and who will drop everything to get the editors what they need for their story angle. Names mentioned within the body of the copy, like Phil Martus's at the bottom, are those people you hope will be quoted or mentioned if your story gets into print—they are not intended to be primary contacts. However, editors may decide to dial them directly, so make sure whoever is named in the release has a file of information at his or her fingertips and is authorized to answer questions."

MAKE SURE IT'S NEWS
"Mistake! This headline simply trumpets the company's achievement. It should read like a news item and give the editor a story hook. I would rewrite the headline this way: New Concept in Magazine and Music Distribution Introduced. It never hurts to use the word *new.* This way the editor has to read on to find out about 'the concept'."

EMPHASIZE BENEFITS
"Don't tell me about the features of a product or service, tell me about the benefits. This is the most common mistake in public relations. You want the copy to get right into how easy the new product is to use or what problem it solves for the magazine's or newspaper's audience. That is what's newsworthy. It is also more difficult to write than simply listing a product's features."

KEEP TO THE POINT
"Don't try to cover the world in a press release. It's a coup for WGE that these magazines have signed on, but it's not critical to the story. I'd just say, 'eight other magazines.' If editors want to know which magazines, they can call. As a rule, try to keep product and company names to a minimum. Don't worry, if an article gets written, your company will get mentioned by virtue of the fact that it's the source of the news."

MAKE SURE IT'S ACCURATE
"This isn't even true. We aren't using affidavits, and WGE isn't doing the billing. We changed our strategy, but in the rush the writer wasn't informed. It sounds obvious, but never let a press release go out unless you're sure the facts are straight."

DON'T BURY THE LEAD
"These points are big news, but they're in the last few sentences. That's known in journalism as 'burying the lead.' This gets right to how easy the product is to use and how profitable it is. That's the kind of important, useful information you should deliver up front."

Use the Internet to Your Advantage

As we saw in Chapter 13, businesses should post their press releases on the Internet as soon as they are written. Having that source as a place where reporters, stockholders, and the general public can learn about you is tremendously cost-effective. Figures 14.8 and 14.9 are two examples of a business, Hewlett-Packard (HP), presenting exciting news to the public and the media. The election of Carly Fiorina as HP's new CEO in 1999 demonstrated that the so-called glass ceiling for women was being shattered in a previously male-dominated industry. Figure 14.8 was short and to the point. Issued at the time Fiorina accepted the post—July 19, 1999—it presented the most critical news. The announcement was of interest around the globe. The release quickly stated the essentials. Notice, too, that links to other information were available. Fiorina has been an instrumental figure in the success of HP in the last few years. She and the board of Hewlett-Packard waged a difficult fight in the merger of HP with Compaq Computer. Figure 14.9 shows the press release announcing the NYSE trading-symbol change for the two companies. Another interesting press release on May 7, 2002, "The New HP Is Ready," can be found at **http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/newsroom/press/07may02a.htm**.

Video Press Releases

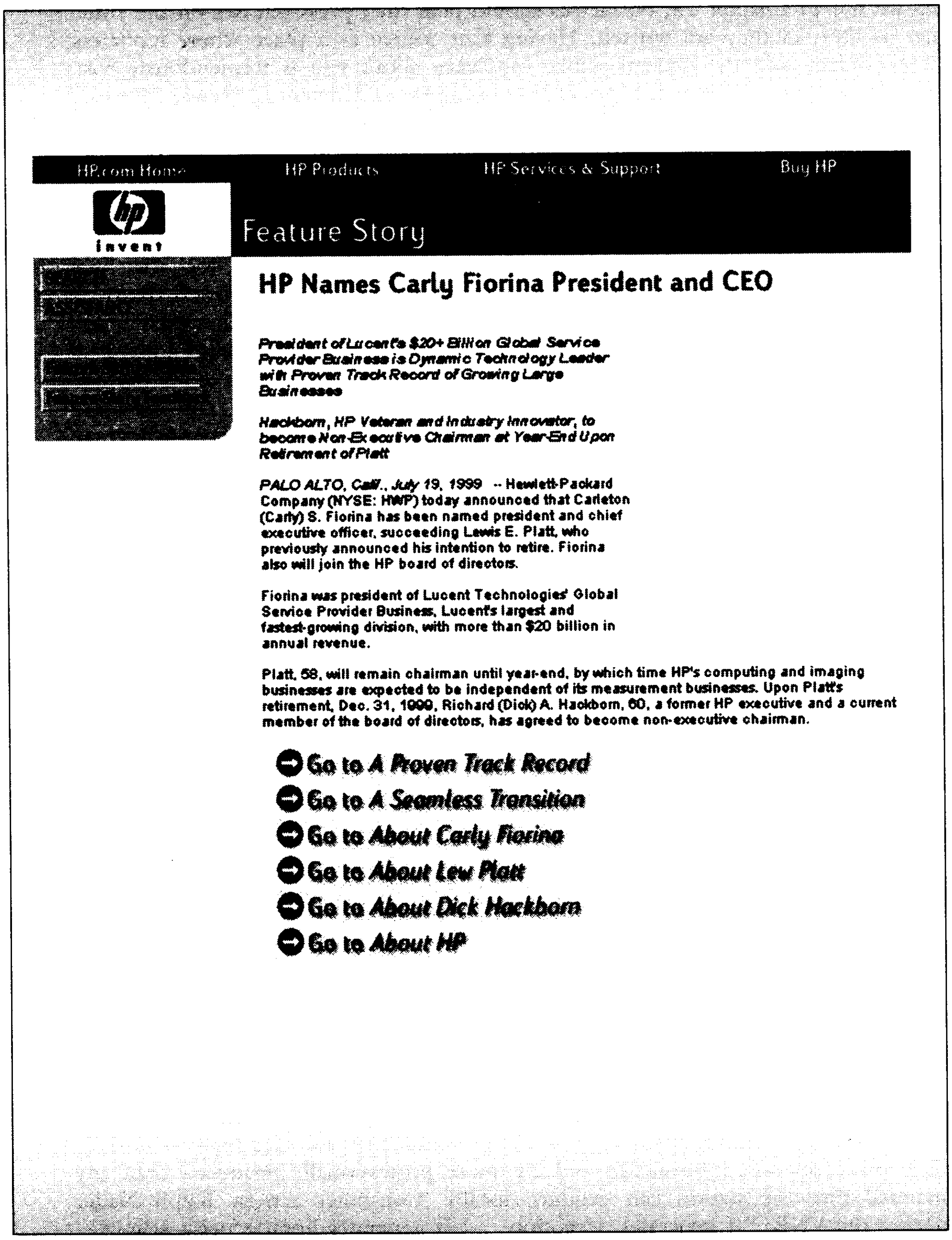
In the last few years the press release has taken on a new look. Today many corporations use videos to replace the paper releases that they once sent. Perhaps you and your organization will want to consider the possibility of using video. In the past, videos were used largely to provide information to employees about their company. Today they are also used for community relations, investor relations, crisis communication, environmental public relations, and other proactive types of communications.[14]

Corporations are increasing their use of video news releases (VNRs) because they realize that many people who can then view their message would never read it in a newspaper or magazine. There is also an advantage for the television stations: VNRs provide stations with video material that is produced like a news story and can be aired as part of a local newscast. On slow news days, a VNR is often used to fill the news gap. To accomplish this, however, it must be of the highest quality.

Companies that distribute VNRs regularly have learned that they must invest heavily in the process. A quality video must be produced, and it must be camouflaged to look like a television news feature. Its purpose is the same as that of all public relations and marketing communications: It must deliver a controlled client message to a targeted audience. To view a sample VNR go to **http://www.jsptv.com/login.asp** or **http://www.cmntv.com/cmn_video_library.asp**.

A question of ethics arises because many VNRs that are furnished to stations have more relevant information and are more professionally produced than any material that the station can produce locally. Consumer activist Ralph Nader decries the VNR: "It generates deception. . . . It generates homogeneity. It generates centralized manipulation. It pollutes the diversity and independent production of news." For this reason he and others demand that TV stations identify VNRs by superimposing a title saying "sponsored source."[15]

Figure 14.8 Hewlett-Packard Press Release Announcing New CEO



HP.com Home | HP Products | HP Services & Support | Buy HP

invent

Feature Story

HP Names Carly Fiorina President and CEO

President of Lucent's $20+ Billion Global Service Provider Business is Dynamic Technology Leader with Proven Track Record of Growing Large Businesses

Hackborn, HP Veteran and Industry Innovator, to become Non-Executive Chairman at Year-End Upon Retirement of Platt

PALO ALTO, Calif., July 19, 1999 -- Hewlett-Packard Company (NYSE: HWP) today announced that Carleton (Carly) S. Fiorina has been named president and chief executive officer, succeeding Lewis E. Platt, who previously announced his intention to retire. Fiorina also will join the HP board of directors.

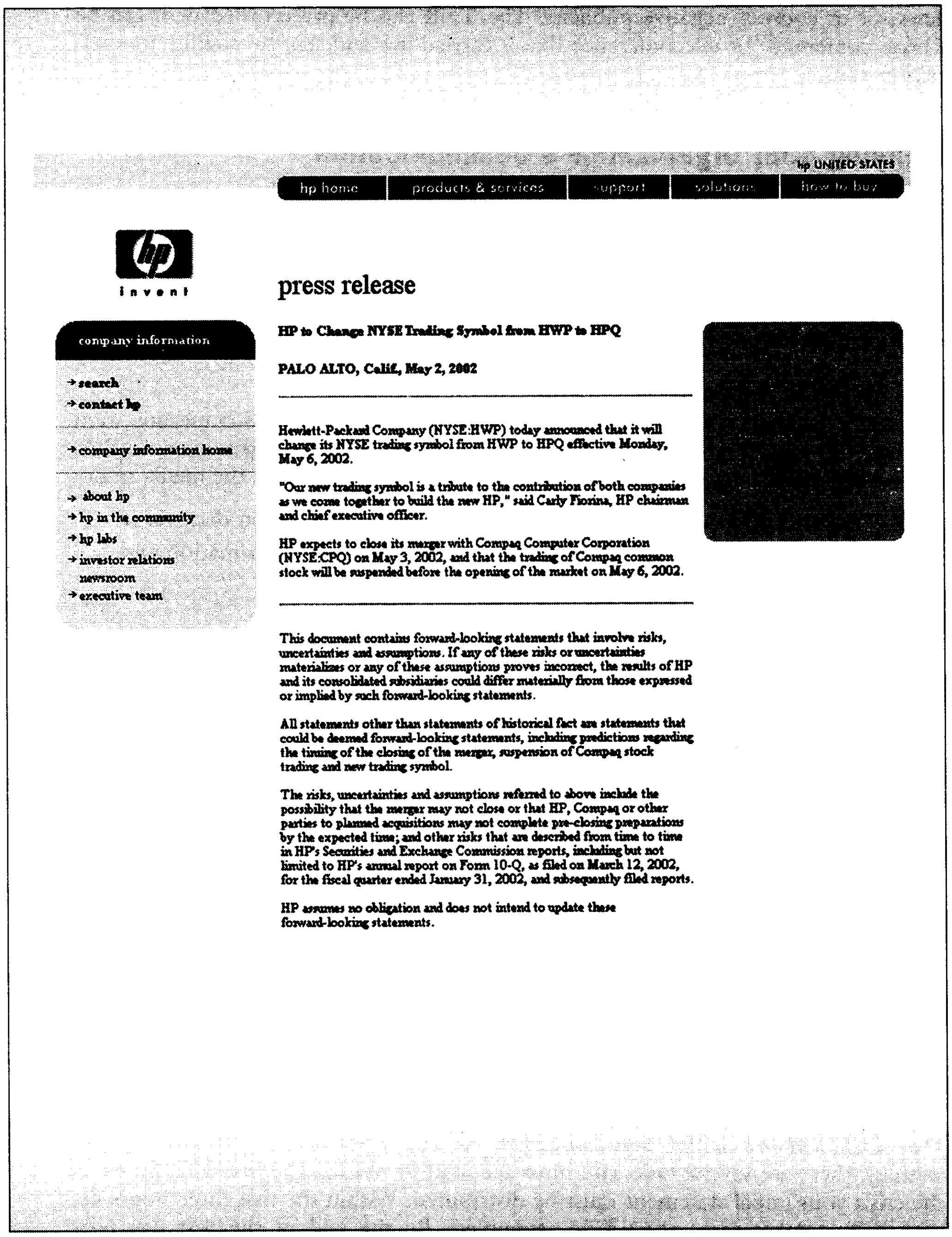
Fiorina was president of Lucent Technologies' Global Service Provider Business, Lucent's largest and fastest-growing division, with more than $20 billion in annual revenue.

Platt, 58, will remain chairman until year-end, by which time HP's computing and imaging businesses are expected to be independent of its measurement businesses. Upon Platt's retirement, Dec. 31, 1999, Richard (Dick) A. Hackborn, 60, a former HP executive and a current member of the board of directors, has agreed to become non-executive chairman.

- Go to *A Proven Track Record*
- Go to *A Seamless Transition*
- Go to *About Carly Fiorina*
- Go to *About Lew Platt*
- Go to *About Dick Hackborn*
- Go to *About HP*

Source: Reprinted by permission of Hewlett-Packard Company.

Figure 14.9 Hewlett-Packard Press Release Announcing NYSE Trading-Symbol Change



hp UNITED STATES

hp home | products & services | support | solutions | how to buy

invent

company information

- search
- contact hp
- company information home
- about hp
- hp in the community
- hp labs
- investor relations newsroom
- executive team

press release

HP to Change NYSE Trading Symbol from HWP to HPQ

PALO ALTO, Calif., May 2, 2002

Hewlett-Packard Company (NYSE:HWP) today announced that it will change its NYSE trading symbol from HWP to HPQ effective Monday, May 6, 2002.

"Our new trading symbol is a tribute to the contribution of both companies as we come together to build the new HP," said Carly Fiorina, HP chairman and chief executive officer.

HP expects to close its merger with Compaq Computer Corporation (NYSE:CPQ) on May 3, 2002, and that the trading of Compaq common stock will be suspended before the opening of the market on May 6, 2002.

This document contains forward-looking statements that involve risks, uncertainties and assumptions. If any of these risks or uncertainties materializes or any of these assumptions proves incorrect, the results of HP and its consolidated subsidiaries could differ materially from those expressed or implied by such forward-looking statements.

All statements other than statements of historical fact are statements that could be deemed forward-looking statements, including predictions regarding the timing of the closing of the merger, suspension of Compaq stock trading and new trading symbol.

The risks, uncertainties and assumptions referred to above include the possibility that the merger may not close or that HP, Compaq or other parties to planned acquisitions may not complete pre-closing preparations by the expected time; and other risks that are described from time to time in HP's Securities and Exchange Commission reports, including but not limited to HP's annual report on Form 10-Q, as filed on March 12, 2002, for the fiscal quarter ended January 31, 2002, and subsequently filed reports.

HP assumes no obligation and does not intend to update these forward-looking statements.

Source: Reprinted by permission of Hewlett-Packard Company.

Your company might consider producing a VNR to announce a new product that is unlike any other on the market, to illuminate an issue or fact that is making news, or to counter negative publicity. The VNR can be prerecorded or it can be a press conference or teleconference that is carried live and sent by satellite to a television station.

Applying Your Organization's Communication Strategy When a Crisis Hits

Your Relationship with the Media

In Chapter 13 we discussed the concept of crisis communication. We now turn our attention to how your organization should communicate with the media.

What the Media Will Do

If and when a crisis occurs it is time to activate your organization's communication strategy. The first thing to realize is that the media have now "put you into play." As Barry McLoughlin describes, there are seven things you can expect the media to do:

1. They will find out about the crisis quickly—often before you discover it.
2. They will monitor each other in hopes of getting more information and gaining an edge.
3. They will try to turn a local event into a national event.
4. They will go where they want, unless you establish clear boundaries.
5. They will report what they know and learn quickly, constantly, and endlessly.
6. They will try to place blame, perpetuate myths, and report rumors.
7. They will establish a process of putting the story's agenda into speculation, next steps, implications, and issues.[16]

While the media will quickly report on the crisis issue, much of their effort will help your organization. As McLoughlin reports, "They can promote pre-crisis education, disseminate warning messages, keep citizens updated with new information, and produce help requests for funds, food, supplies, and volunteers."[17] Be sure to supply media representatives with the kinds of information they request—but double-check all information before releasing it.

At the same time you are supplying information to the media you need to be monitoring the media's activity. Make a list of each media outlet and each journalist. Monitor their stories. Record each briefing, conference, and interview.[18] Recognize your vulnerable areas and work with your communication team to strengthen the weak areas.

Your Organization's Initial Communication. As you activate your communication strategy, there are several tasks you must accomplish. Within the first 60 minutes of the crisis your initial statement must be distributed. Within the first three hours the crisis-management team should be assembled. By the end of the first day your short-term operations and communication process must be up and running. From that point until the end of the crisis, regular press releases and possible press conferences will become the norm.

Your Initial Statement. This statement is critical and will determine the state of your organization's image and credibility. "The statement will serve as official notification of the accident/incident and should meet federal, state, local, and/or regulatory agency requirements for emergency announcements." In this statement you will include:

- Description of the crisis situation;
- Assessment of public and environmental danger;
- When local authorities were notified; what products, processes, or materials were involved;
- The response that has been taken;
- Additional steps to contain or remedy the emergency;
- Heroic actions of employees or emergency personnel;
- The extent of injuries or death; and
- People to contact for further information.[19]

Be careful to not make speculations in the statement, especially about the cause of the crisis. You should also not include information about damage costs, insurance coverage, possible negligence, and who will be held responsible. It is important that the media and public understand from your statement that your organization is prepared and in control of the crisis process, will keep the media and public informed of changes, is working with any regulatory authorities, and that the organization is concerned and cares about the damage and harm that has occurred. If you need to make an apology, make it, and make it clear, expressive, and ungrudgingly. The apology should be made in the initial statement and should be made to the public. This initial statement will usually be your first press release, although it is often delivered at your first press conference.

Make Full Use of Your Company's Web Site

One of the first places journalists will turn when a crisis hits is to your company's Web site. They will look for the name of the PR contact and whether a press kit is available. While there they will quickly check basic facts about your company: location, products, names of executives and board members, financial information, and a description of the crisis events. They will try to learn the "spin" you are placing on the issue. They will also survey past press releases.[20] Remember, your site is on 24/7, it's globally accessible, and it needs to be constantly updated during a crisis event.

During the 9-11 WTC attack some organizations used their Web sites well, others not very well at all. With the fear of mass Anthrax mailings, attention turned to Bayer A.G., the company that makes Cipro, one of the drug remedies for the chemical. After the first Anthrax-laced letters were found, a rumor emerged that Bayer A.G. had a limited supply of Cipro on hand and they were unable to produce enough of the drug to meet demand. On October 19, 2001, Bayer representatives told *The New York Times* that "Bayer is prepared to meet demand and is *shocked* at talk of governments allowing Bayer's patent to be mimicked by other drug makers." During that same time Bayer never discussed the active crisis on its Web site. It chose instead to defend itself in private statements to selected media outlets in the United States.[21]

One proactive Web site user in the midst of tragedy was Cantor Fitzgerald. As described in Chapter 13, it lost over 600 employees in the WTC attack. Within a matter of hours it had posted its first Web message. During the remainder of the week additional messages were used to list victims, survivors, and a variety of useful information. Because of the company's quick response and Howard Lutnick's caring and empathetic manner, Cantor Fitzgerald's actions were praised. You can review Cantor's Web sites at: **http://www.cantor.com/cantor** and **http://www.cantorrelief.org.**[22]

Make the Best Use of the Press Conference

While it is apparent that press releases are a critical tool to use in an organization's relationship with the media, press conferences are also important. In Chapter 13 the crisis management plan described the attention that should go into equipping a room where a press conference will be held. The following ideas should be considered in making sure that the conference takes place at the right time and in the right way. Later in this chapter we will go into depth on the proper communication method that you should consider using if you are the designated spokesperson for the conference.

Determine Whether a Press Conference Is Necessary

News conferences are required when a disaster or crisis has occurred. This is the time your organization will make a statement and the media will ask questions and seek answers that they can use in getting stories to their audiences. If you are tempted to call a conference merely to make an announcement that can go into a press release, don't call the conference. If the media receive little worthwhile news they will likely hold a negative impression of your organization and could possibly look for a "deeper" news story.

Pick the Right Location

Ideally your organization will have the space for a conference room and it will be equipped with many of the items described in the crisis-management plan. On the other hand, the crisis may dictate that a conference be held in a local motel meeting room or other off-site location. Avoid sites close to the disaster because scenes of the events can add negative impact to your positive words.

Choose the Right Time

As we have seen in previous examples, it is important that an organization communicate immediately when a crisis occurs. Often a conference must be called just a short time after the event happens. While the sooner the better is the norm, make sure that you have ample time to get all the necessary information and also time to prepare for the conference questions.

Proper timing also refers to the time of day. Realize that each medium has story deadlines. One expert says that the 10 A.M. conference is such a popular time that often not all conferences can be covered. He suggests 1 P.M. "It leaves plenty of time for the morning paper reporters, and you make evening drive (4 to 6 P.M.) on the radio."[23]

Be Prepared

Being interviewed by the media can be very intimidating, much more so than merely giving a speech. There is a great amount of preparation that must go into the typical press conference interview. Take the time to prepare. It will be to your advantage.

Some Final Thoughts

The following list offers some additional items that need to be considered. Attention to these can help make your conference a success.

- Provide a conducive atmosphere for the media. Consider having chairs, tables, pads, pencils, electrical outlets, telephone lines, typewriters, and microphones available.
- Prepare statements and handouts in advance—consider press releases, fact sheets, photos, typical questions and answers, biographies, product samples, and a glossary of technical terms.
- Pay attention to who is invited. Typically all media should be notified.
- Arrange for supporting people, such as experts, to be available.
- Prepare supporting visual aids. Have backup equipment and supplies, such as bulbs, available.
- Keep the conference concise and short. Don't hold the press longer than necessary.
- Follow up by telephone with those media not in attendance. Get answers to those present who asked questions requiring research.

Media Interviews

You may feel nervous and uncomfortable in delivering a planned business presentation, having a reporter arrive during an unexpected company emergency and, while holding a microphone in front of your face, saying, "What does your company plan to do about this?" In many ways, today's manager has to expect the unexpected. While most recent graduates will not be expected to respond to interviews early in their careers, most will eventually participate in both print and broadcast interviews.

This second section of the chapter will explain how you should ***preview the circumstances*** of the interview before it begins. You will then lead through the steps of ***preparing*** for the interview. Next, you will see the reasons to ***orally practice*** for your interview. Five ***performance techniques to use*** in the interview will then be given. Finally, we will present 15 items that should be asked and answered as ***post-interview evaluation questions.***

Preview the Circumstances

Before you ever agree to a media interview, assure yourself that you really want to be interviewed and that you will carry a positive mental attitude into the interview. This section prescribes five things that you should investigate prior to preparing for your interview.

Determine the Reason for the Interview

Before you meet with the reporter, check out the reason for the meeting and decide whether you are the right person for the interview. Ego sometimes takes over when some executives receive a call from the press. While many would willingly dismiss the opportunity to give a speech, these same individuals often imagine themselves a star with their pictures on television or the front page of the paper. Be sure that the interview will be in your company's and your best interest. Do not let your ego damage your corporate career.

If you receive an unexpected call, make a quick excuse and do some checking before you respond. First, learn as much as you can about the reporter. What types of stories does he or she cover? What is the typical interviewing style? What are the potential reasons for the call? What are the expectations of the medium? It may not be possible to get answers to all these questions, given the usual short time frame, but try.

If the reason for the call is included in the invitation, then ask some additional questions. Is a response from you and your company necessary or appropriate? Are you the correct person to be involved? Do any company policies impinge on what you can say? An executive producer for CBS News said,

> If you cannot speak to the subject with interest and conviction, you ought not to. . . . Choose someone else in your organization who is articulate and knowledgeable.[24]

Anticipate Media Appearances

If a crisis such as those discussed in Chapter 13 has occurred, or if your company has a statement to make to the public, such as those in Figures 14.8 and 14.9, you may be the spokesperson selected. If you have anticipated a possible media appearance, you can respond quickly.[25]

Avoid a Negative Mind-Set

Some managers seek any excuse to avoid talking to reporters. They are on the other extreme from the ego star; you should avoid this position, too. Your experience is indeed likely to be negative if you hold mental impressions such as, "I've made it up the management ladder this far without going before a TV camera, so why should I risk my neck now?" or "I've never met a reporter who didn't try to crucify me with biased questions." Once you are "burned" by the media, the quick urge to respond disappears.

Jim Lehrer, host of the Public Broadcasting System's popular *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer,* cautions against taking the negative approach. He has said,

> the most serious thing that can hurt an interview is for the person who is being interviewed to think that, because a reporter asks a certain question, the reporter necessarily supports that position.[26]

While negative stories sometimes run and inaccuracies do occur, most are the result either of a reporter's ignorance about the subject matter or time pressure in doing the interview and assembling the story. Build a positive mind-set that regards the reporter as a person who has a job to do with a deadline to meet and who wants to get all the facts. This gives you a wonderful opportunity to do your homework and supply the reporter with information that is clearly organized and presented in a polished and professional way.

Recognize Your Rights

By recognizing your rights in relation to the media, you can avoid the negative mind-set and develop a positive media initiative. Gordon Andrew, a New York public relations consultant, lists several rights that a manager should remember.[27]

You have a right to check a reporter's credentials, to know the reasons for a requested interview, and to be told the nature of the questions you will be asked. You are not required to answer questions on the spot regardless of a tight timeframe the reporter may have. In fact, delaying an answer until you can call back later often gives you the time needed to assemble your thoughts.

You have a right not to discuss certain information that might be sensitive to you or your company's interests. If the reporter asks a hypothetical question, you are not required to answer it. You also have the right "to reject a reporter's facts, figures, and terminology." All of this must be done, however, calmly and with self-control.

You have a right to have your viewpoint fairly represented in an interview. This does not mean free advertising for you or your company. It merely means that you are protected from a reporter's verbal abuse.

You have a right to establish attribution rules with a reporter before the interview. Such an agreement needs to be made in advance because if you tell a reporter your comments are off the record *after* you have made them, he or she is not obligated to ignore them. Four standard agreements are normally used:

> ***On the record*** means that everything said may be used. ***Not for attribution*** means [your] statements will be attributed to a general source, such as "a company spokesperson." ***Background*** means that information will be used but not attributed. ***Off the record*** means that nothing said may be published; the interview is a means of briefing a reporter on a topic or situation.[28]

According to the public relations firm Barron & Whitesell, an organization's crisis-management plan should contain a media policy that spells out precisely the areas of a company that must be protected. Some companies by their very nature must protect proprietary information. Others need to restrict media access to certain parts of a plant or building because of dangerous working conditions or security requirements. Make sure that you and your employees understand company policy before critical events occur.

Develop a Media Initiative

First, consult with the corporate communications or public relations department of your firm. Since these groups carefully develop media policies and strategies, they may give you some words of advice, help you prepare, and especially, help you parallel your statements with those of other company employees.

Second, develop a proactive mind-set and prepare yourself to meet with the media. Familiarize yourself with the media facilities before you ever get in front of the camera: Take guided tours of the press room or studio and join in live audience situations to get a feel for the way interviewers work in media situations.

Third, remember that you need not become buddies with the interviewers, but you should become more media conscious. Develop contacts with editors and reporters. Your public relations office can supply the names of contacts. In addition, you can develop your own list by telephoning or writing media offices. Building good relations with these individuals can help you for many years. Editorial directors will generally welcome your ideas for possible stories, and while they may not agree with your position, they will certainly benefit from your input. By having a media network in place, you can respond to both the positive and negative interviews. One reporter describes what occurs when the media initiative is missing.

> We find that most people who have something positive to say don't approach us at that point, but wait until something negative develops. Then when we reach them, they're in a position of defending themselves.[29]

With media contacts in place, you will find yourself less defensive and more eager to be interviewed.

Jim Lehrer comments on how a positive media relationship helped Goodyear bridge the gap between itself and the media when a potential health hazard in the manufacturing of a vinyl chloride monomer was detected in the company's Niagara Falls, New York, plant. "I think Goodyear set a tremendous precedent in its handling of this situation. Goodyear's public relations people were on the phone saying, 'This is what happened. . . .' And every time we called Goodyear, they told us the good and the bad. . . . They answered every question we had. It was the first experience like that we've had in a long time."[30]

If you have gone from asking questions about the interviewer to developing a media initiative, you are now ready to enter the preparation phase.

Prepare for the Interview

Being anxious about an interview is normal, but there are positive ways to minimize the nervousness. Make a decision at the outset to be honest and to speak from your heart. Some interviewees ask a variety of questions about the reporter, develop their positive mind-set, and then go immediately into the interview performance. The majority of those interviews are disastrous. Instead, the wise interviewee will spend considerable time preparing for the interview. Good preparation always reaps good results.

There are five steps to good preparation: analyzing your audience, organizing your thoughts, anticipating topics and questions, developing your responses, and being aware of additional concerns. The five steps are, in essence, the same as those used for good preparation of both written materials and oral presentations, which were described in earlier chapters.

Analyze Your Dual Audience

One of the first steps in preparing for a speech or business presentation is to analyze your audience. The same holds true for a media interview, but here you have a dual audience: the reporter and the public. Learn as much as you can about the person who will interview you. If you learn your reporter is not very pleasant, develop a positive mind-set of how excited you are about the news you have to convey and how excited the reporter will be after you convey the information. Mary Munter, a communications professor at the Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth College, shares some sound words of advice for this preparation stage:

> Consider, first, reporters in general. Most of them are serious, hardworking professionals, just like you. Their job is to find newsworthy stories that will interest their audience. They are under time pressure to meet deadlines, commercial pressures to increase advertising revenues, and competitive pressures to scoop their rivals. They must compress what you say to fit space or airtime. They want to come up with something arousing and engaging.

Consider also the individual reporters. What do they know about you? What do you represent to them? How do they perceive your expertise? What do you know about their age, their training, and background? What are their opinions and interests? What are they likely to agree with? What are they likely to disagree with? Are they expert business reporters or general reporters for whom you may have to simplify and define terms?

Next, consider your readers or listeners. Who are they? Middle America watching a general talk show or specialists reading a technical journal? What do they know about you, your topic, and your relationship to your topic? Once you have established their level of expertise, be sure to talk in terms they will understand.[31]

Realize that an important difference exists in print and broadcast media. Newspaper and magazine reporters work on specific story lines and seek creditable sources for factual information. While they may have short-term deadlines (that evening for the next morning's newspaper edition), they often work on major stories for several days. In the latter situation, you often have more flexibility to get additional information to a reporter following the interview.

Broadcast media is a more immediate communication through which the public will first see and hear management talking about an event. Reporters who cover fast-breaking stories sometimes talk to whomever they can obtain for an interview. In emergency situations they arrive fast, cover as much territory as they can, and leave quickly to have their material on the next major newscast. While they may return for more material, you probably do not have much flexibility in establishing interviews at later times. If you, as an interviewee, are traveling to a radio or television station for an interview, you will probably find the personnel a little easier to work with, time frames more flexible, and the pressures not as great.

Organize Your Thoughts

Lewis Young, former editor-in-chief of *Business Week*, believes that effective media responses are not the result of a well-spoken person, but of much preparation.

> Before the annual meeting, the CEO will spend days rehearsing, answering hypothetical questions that his key staffpeople put to him. On the day of the meeting he appears knowledgeable, in control, deft, and impressive. I am amazed at how many CEOs just show up for an important media interview, even though the interviewer is far more skilled at asking questions than anybody who will be at the annual meeting.[32]

Once you have organized your words, consider the style that you will employ in delivering them. Some critics believe that style is more important than substance because television is primarily a visual medium. Jack Hilton, in his book *On Television*, contends that executives should remember four things before going on-camera:

> (1) very few viewers will remember their names; (2) virtually all will remember their affiliation; (3) few will remember a single point they make; (4) all viewers will decide promptly whether they like them or not.[33]

The person who is prepared and in control, not the one who tries to wing it, will leave the most positive impression.

Anticipate the Topics and Questions

How do you prepare for an interview? After you have analyzed your audience, begin thinking of the possible topics of discussion and questions you might be asked. You can request a list of questions in advance from the reporter; however, you probably will not receive them. Many reporters work on such a tight time schedule that they prepare the questions while driving to your interview. Most reporters will tell you the general topics only, fearing that further disclosure might produce a dull, canned interview. You should be able to anticipate key questions, especially if the discussion is about an emergency situation. Brainstorm with your staff or colleagues. Let them play devil's advocate and help you decide on the most likely questions and the best responses. Keep in mind that any questions you are dreading will surely be asked. *Be prepared for the most difficult question and any others you can anticipate.*

As you prepare to develop your thoughts into responses consider how you can get your most positive message across. The Canadian Psychological Association makes five recommendations to its members in preparation for media interviews:

Make the Story New. Your comments should add something new to the listener's knowledge base. Whether it is a new perspective on a familiar topic, or the results of a new study, your audience will be more interested if the material is new or stated in a new way.

Make the Information Interesting. Word your ideas in ways that will make your audience want to hear more. Deliver your words with excitement.

Make the Story Relevant. Word your material so that the listeners can relate to it. Develop it to fit their lives.

Make the Story Understandable. Avoid jargon. Word your material so that an eight-year-old could comprehend the facts. Remember, the person on the street or at home watching the news is not your peer. The media love sound bites and good quotes. To help the potential listener to get clarity of your message, list your points before your speak. "I would like to make three points before I take your questions." State the number as each point is spoken. Numbering the points also makes it hard for a reporter to interject other questions until you are finished. Editors also have a harder time cutting out important material.

Make the Story Memorable. Frame your ideas with a metaphor or story. Stick to one or two key points for ease of memory.[34]

Develop Your Responses

Starting with the toughest questions you can imagine, write down simple one-, two-, or three-point responses. Later, in private or with the aid of your colleagues, practice these responses orally.[35] For now, make sure the responses fit into a 30-second time frame. For the press or television this will consist of about 75 words. Radio newscasters love one-sentence statements. Television deals essentially in headline news. A business story that rates a column in a major newspaper may command only a single sentence on a national television network evening news program.

Brundage points out the danger of top management talking too long for a broadcast. "Top management is standing there talking and talking about the incident, and the reporter is standing there with the mike thinking about having to go back and stand in line at the editing booth to edit the interview. . . . That is where there is a possibility to be taken out of context. Top management should be taught ahead to time to talk in 10- or 15-second sound bites for radio and television."[36]

There are six important things to remember in developing the response you anticipate using.

Lead with the Most Important News. Businesspeople typically present ideas by leading up to the news. But the media require a different approach. Both the press and broadcast media reorganize what you say in order to meet their needs. You can help the reporter by stating your most important piece of news first. People will remember it better if you lead with the news and then support your statement. If editors need to cut words because of time or space restrictions, your main ideas that would have come at the end of your statement will not be on the cutting-room floor. Chester Burger, a media expert, believes that most businesspeople have an inability to get across what they want to say to the media:

> They fail to make the points they wanted to make, and then they blame the reporter. Usually, it is their own fault. They have been playing what is called the "ping-pong game." The reporter asks a question; they answer it. He [or she] asks another; they answer it. Back and forth the ball bounces but the executive does not know how to squeeze in what he regards as his [or her] important points.[37]

Follow the most important news with strong and substantial facts. Cite specific times and dates. Learn names and their correct pronunciation. The use of statistics can be effective, but they should be simple, easy to understand, and of interest to the listener. Remember, the message prepared for the eye of the reader will strike the ear of the listener in an entirely different way. To say, "70 percent of the public approve of our policy and 15 percent don't care" is much better than to say, "70 percent like the policy, and this consists of 80 percent metroplex dwellers and 20 percent rural residents. The 80 percent metroplex supporters are made up of 60 percent women and 40 percent men, with 30 percent being children." While the latter may be true, few readers or listeners will take the time to figure it out. You will also sound dull and disorganized.

Use the Public Position. When developing answers, build in responses to the public's needs, desires, and wants. Tell them how they will benefit from a plan. Tell them also that they are free from danger. If plenty of time is available, you may even want to supply film footage of some specific examples.

Word Your Message with Care. Aim your message at about a tenth-grade level for understandability. Avoid technical jargon and organizational acronyms and buzzwords.

Use Positive Words. During interviews, especially those involving an emergency or disaster, examine each word for its truth and for its implied meaning. Every company and industry has a list of positive and negative words. With your colleagues, decide which ones you should use and which you should avoid. For example:

Positive Words	Negative Words
Safety	Negligence
Care	Death
Concern	Accidents
Employment opportunities	Discrimination
Long record of service	Fired
Excellent relations	Catastrophe
Equal opportunities	Layoffs
Satisfactory	Probably could happen . . .

The point is not to pick euphemisms, or words that substitute an inoffensive term for one considered offensively explicit, but to reword your thoughts by focusing first on the positive.

The usage becomes clearer when put into sentence form. Instead of saying, "The company does not consider this problem to be its fault. We have had four years without a serious accident," say:

> Our safety record is excellent. We constantly monitor the process and this has resulted in four years of accident-free work. Because we are concerned for safety, we were immediately on top of the situation when it occurred.

Build Strong Transitions and Bridges. You can help media editors by flagging your most important points. This can be done with phrases like, "The main thing I would like the public to remember is. . . ."

Bridging is also a way to move a reporter off a controversial question by reiterating key messages. Bridging is done when you briefly answer a question and then form a bridge to an idea you wish to make:

> Yes, I can see where that could be a possible way of chemical exposure. However, in the 15 years that our company has produced this and other dangerous, but necessary, chemicals, I am happy to say that the EPA has praised our handling procedures.

Another example of bridging is:

> As your paper reported two weeks ago, in our Dallas facility 96 percent of our employees rated our safety procedures as either *excellent* or *superior*. In fact, we have received the national chemical makers award for "Safety First" every year during the last five years.

Other bridge statements include: "Let's consider the larger issue here . . ."; "Before I get to that, let me fill you in on . . ."; and even, "I don't know about that, but I do know. . . ." Remember, states Karen Berg of CommCore Communication Strategies, "once you cross the bridge, blow it up. You don't go back over it or you will pay a toll."[38]

Develop a Plan for Handling the Tough and Tricky Questions. Building a healthy respect for the media takes place as you recognize the power of influence. While you should avoid developing an adversarial impression of journalists, recognize that their questions can sometimes be tough or tricky. This is all the more reason for you to practice with someone who asks you possible questions.

As you practice with your colleagues, have them throw you very difficult questions. There are seven types of tough and tricky questions. Learn how to respond in a cool and professional manner, but not defensively. Responding to these questions is not easy, yet you can master the process with practice.

1. *False questions* are sometimes asked. Correct the false statement before you respond with an answer. Try to paraphrase the question a second time during the answer.

   Reporter: The XYZ Company has a track record for manufacturing faulty products. Does the recall of your product surprise you?

   Interviewee: XYZ Company's manufacturing record is the most solid in the industry. None of our products are faulty. We issued this recall to correct a potential problem that had been discovered and to assure our customers that they will continue to receive quality products.

2. *The loaded preface* is another problem encountered in questioning. If you miss the reporter's opening, you may find that in the final media presentation, you appear to agree with something you are completely against.

   Reporter: Mr. Jones, your company is under investigation for cost overruns and bribery in regard to one of your government contracts. Can you tell us, Mr. Jones, how are minority workers treated in your organization?

   The respondent in this example should fear that the reporter is really trying to do a story on cost overruns and bribery. The respondent should either dissect the question and handle both parts, or deny the loaded preface and then construct a bridge to the answer he or she wants to give.

3. *The what-if question* asks about something that has not happened yet. For example, "I know it hasn't been announced officially yet, but what will you do if you are asked to serve as the next executive VP?" Unless you want this information public, refuse to answer the question, make the irrelevance clear, and bridge to your ideas.

4. *The irrelevant question* asks you about material totally unrelated to the subject of the interview. For example, you are being interviewed on several legal matters pertaining to your business, and you are asked about your views on legalizing marijuana. Again, refuse to answer the question, make the irrelevance clear, and bridge to your ideas.

5. *False relationship* is another unfair question that assumes that because an event precedes an outcome, it necessarily caused it. For example, "Metro's stock went down $3.65 as soon as you were appointed to the board.

Would you care to comment on this?" Beware of the false causal relationship and do not let it go unchallenged.

6. *Popular prejudice* is shown when the reporter appeals to the popular idea rather than to the specific situation. For example, "Don't you think it's un-American for Congress to agree to support corporate stock options?" Interviewees should try to define or challenge words like ***un-American*** before moving on to their own points about the subject:

   Interviewee: I challenge what you consider to be un-American in this bill, when it allows companies to find and hire the best managers for the jobs, and to provide dividends to millions of American stockholders. But the real point I want to make is. . . .

Turn a Negative Question into a Positive Answer. If an interviewer makes a statement or phrases a question in the negative, never answer it or repeat it. Many people have done so, only to watch themselves say the negative question on camera after it has been edited. Instead, rephrase the question into a positive statement and then add your answer.

Years ago, Carl A. Gerstacker, then-chairman of Dow Chemical Company, went on the *Today* show to discuss an explosive, six-letter word: napalm. Gerstacker, using a carefully designed game plan, told anchor Hugh Downs that yes, his company produced napalm for its country during a time of war but that it was now out of the napalm business. Gerstacker then artfully began to answer the questions by talking about the *lifesaving* products his company manufactured, including a measles vaccine. Michael Klepper, whose firm trains executives for encounters with the media, and who provided the game plan for Gerstacker, recalls: "He was able to turn the napalm issue around by concentrating on his company's lifesaving products, which he presented in a very favorable light. Downs finally told him: 'Gee, I didn't know chemical companies were also pharmaceutical companies.' "[39]

Techniques for turning negative questions into positive answers are displayed in the following examples.

> *Question*: Isn't it true that your driver, Joe Ferguson, who was involved in this fatal collision, was cited for driving while intoxicated in 1979, and at that time was in a very serious accident?
>
> *Answer*: Joe Ferguson came to work for us on February 15, 1982. He, like all our other drivers, was carefully checked and passed the Truckers' Safety Standards Test, administered by the County Vehicle Department, with a score of 89 out of 100. Since that date, he has worked steadily and up to today has had an accident-free record with our firm. Among our 65 steady drivers, he has been among the 90 percent with no reportable accident of record since June 1, 1983.
>
> *Question*: Although your bank has some 35 vice-presidents, how do you explain the fact that only five are women?
>
> *Answer*: All appointments to vice-president are made on the basis of Board selection and an examination. Every opening is posted and any employee of the appropriate grade is eligible to apply. In the past three years, we have had nine openings for vice president. Ten women took the examination and two were

appointed. In the same period 30 men took the examination and seven were appointed. Thus 20 percent of the women taking the exam were appointed and 23 percent of the men. I would say that we had a similar level of treatment and equality in both cases, wouldn't you?[40]

Be Aware of Additional Concerns

The final step in good interview preparation is to refresh your mind with some additional concerns.

Do Not Respond to Unchecked Statistics. If an interviewer throws statistics at you with which you are unfamiliar or have not checked out, do not answer the question. Answer instead, "I'm sorry, but I do not have those figures; they are presently being calculated. I will, however, obtain them and follow up with you this afternoon," or "I have not seen the figures."

Do Not Use a "No Comment" Comment. At one time "no comment" meant simply that there was no news to share. Today when a company spokesperson uses the words it implies that there is something to hide. If you cannot answer, say why you can't answer. Saying "no comment" makes you sound evasive and secretive and it creates suspicion.[41] Say instead, "I am sorry, but we cannot make additional comments on the event until next of kin have been notified."

As the Intel case in Chapter 13 displayed, a crisis situation requires interaction with the media. You cannot hide behind a "no comment" statement and expect the media to go away. They will report the story with or without your help. If you have facts that they need, share them quickly and help resolve the issue quickly.[42]

Do Not Answer with a Simple "Yes" or "No." After uttering easy yes or no answers, you may be surprised to find them cut and pasted onto another question by an unscrupulous newsperson. Phrase your response in a yes-or-no context but expand it to at least a full sentence. For example, a reporter asks, "Will the merger be completed before the first of the month?" The answer may be yes, but you are better off saying, "Both sides are working hard to complete the merger by the month's end. I believe it will be accomplished by the first of next month."

Be Careful About Stating Your Personal Opinions. In most instances, you are representing the company. Do not cross the line and state your position as the company's position unless you clearly know your positions are the same and you have been authorized to make that position public.

Tell Them If You Do Not Know the Answer. If you are asked a question for which you have absolutely no answer, tell them, "I do not know the answer to that question at this time. I will, however, find the answer." If you know where the answer can be found, direct them to it.

Never Stonewall a Position. Since the Watergate era of the 1970s, both the news industry and the public have become very suspicious of stonewalling tactics. Issues that are unequivocally denied, or statements such as "I will be exonerated," seem to be offered by individuals who have not thought of good answers. The statements are often mere smoke screens.

Avoid Talking Off the Record. In many cases, statements made off the record have a way of appearing in the middle of news stories. A good dictum is to say nothing that you do not wish to see in print, and follow this advice:

> The press will assume you are on the record; that is, that they have the right to quote and report what was said and done to attribute statements to you. A rule that some spokespersons learn the hard way is that you are not off the record just by saying so. If reporters agree to an off-the-record comment, they are saying they will not report it. If you go off the record in a press conference, all reporters must agree, not just the one asking questions.[43]

Record Your Own Interview. You may want to take your own small tape recorder to your interview. Taping the session will not only be good for use in future practice sessions, but also to check a reporter's quotes against actual statements that you made. Be open with the reporter about wanting to make the recording. Most reporters will not care. If one does object, you should not only ask why but reconsider whether you want to go ahead with the interview.

Always Tell the Truth. The press and public accept that you may not tell the whole truth for many reasons, including competition. But if you resort to lying—even once—the press, the public, and your colleagues will never again trust your credibility.[44] The good news about bad news is that you can get it out of the way and prevent a continuing story. More often than not, lies lead to continuing probes and additional stories. A vice president of Hygrade Food Products, a meat processor that had to handle rumors that razor blades were in the company's hot dogs, makes this statement about lying, "One thing the experience taught me is that total candor can convert a reporter from a hard-nosed muckraker into a sympathetic company supporter. . . . Not only does honesty pay, it beats having to remember what you told the media yesterday."[45]

As we have seen in this section on preparation, wise interviewees spend a considerable amount of time preparing for the interview. They follow the steps of analyzing all audiences, organizing their thoughts, anticipating possible topics and questions, developing their responses, and being aware of various additional concerns.

Practice

There is a big difference between knowing the material and being able to talk about it. After you go through the preparation stages thoroughly, you may feel rather smug about the answers you have devised. Beware: Crafty reporters have reduced many overconfident executives to bumbling, incoherent, embarrassed interviewees. Just watch *60 Minutes* or *20/20* to get the picture.

To protect yourself from disgrace and to turn in a magnificent performance requires practicing your material. Spend considerable time reading out loud the responses to all your anticipated questions. After you remember the material fairly well, turn your office into a mock studio and practice with your staff and colleagues. Have them ask you the questions in the style of a reporter, including their fast pace, vocal inflections, and nonverbal gestures. If you give the wrong answer, have them repeat the question. You should practice until you feel confident of your ability to meet and answer any question a reporter might ask, no matter how tough the question or abusive the reporter's style.

The practice process used for interview questions and statements is almost identical to that described in Chapter 11 on the business presentation.

Performance Techniques to Use

On the day of your interview the focus is on you—your statements, the issues you represent, and the image you create. You hope your preparation and practice time will pay off. If a print reporter interviews you, refer to the section on preparation earlier in this chapter. The following five ideas are primarily for television interviews.

Dress for the Occasion

Pick comfortable clothing that reflects your profession. If you are warm-blooded, choose cooler fabrics. Avoid dark colors: black and navy blue look black on television and they lose detail. Try grays, a lighter navy, and beiges. Avoid tweeds, large stripes, and bold patterns. Solid pastel colors are best for dresses. Whites can cause glare and make your face look dark. The best-color shirts are off-white or light blue. Muted colors in ties are better than those with bright, large designs. According to Arnold Zenker, a media expert, "Your taste in clothing is your own business. But out-of-date, ill-fitting clothing creates an image that is out-of-date and unimpressive for an executive. Contemporary, professional clothing is a must for any television appearance."[46]

If you wear makeup, be sure it has a powder base rather than oil, so your face will not be shiny. Keep jewelry to a minimum—wedding rings and watches are acceptable. Avoid any objects, such as rhinestones, that can reflect studio lights. Glasses can be another problem. Many people who wear them do not want their pictures taken with them on and will probably not want their television image to be one wearing glasses. However, because the objects are so natural to the wearer, to be without them seems awkward, especially if the person cannot see properly. Glass lenses, on the other hand, can cause a reflection. If you appear regularly before the media, you may want to invest in a technique used by Preston Smith, a former governor of Texas. Smith felt uncomfortable without his glasses, but he grew tired of the glare they caused. He purchased a set of frames that matched his glasses and wore the frames, minus the lenses, during his interviews.

Keep Your Cool

As difficult as it may seem, you must maintain a totally calm appearance. Do a deep-breathing exercise before meeting the reporter, or before the camera is turned on. This exercise requires that you exhale all the air out of your lungs and that you very slowly inhale through your nose. Doing this a couple of times helps to lower the anxiety and give you a greater sense of well-being. If you are being interviewed during a live event, deep breathe again when there is a break for commercials. Look and act relaxed. Regardless of the turmoil in your stomach, never let the interviewer and audience suspect that you are not in control. Knowing your material and having practiced your comments are the first step in making this a reality. Second, work on maintaining the positive image of a professional executive that you have viewed so many times on television. If a reporter tries to provoke you or get you off balance, do not take it personally. Maintain your calm and unemotional manner. As Jim Lehrer says, "An executive who cannot hold his [or her] cool and who takes everything personally is a setup in an interview. I mean, you're going to get to him [or her]."[47]

A classic example is when Microsoft's Bill Gates, in 1994, got mad and walked out of a network-televised interview with newscaster Connie Chung. For watchers, that established a negative image of Mr. Gates as a rich and arrogant person. The image, in fact, was hard to overcome as Gates testified in the 1998–99 Microsoft antitrust case. Years later, it was evident as Gates was interviewed by anchorwoman Barbara Walters that he had undergone extensive media training.[48]

Jack Hilton offers this tip for those who easily perspire. "Ideally, you should discipline yourself not to perspire. Practically, if you need to wipe your brow, do it with a forefinger, and discreetly wipe your forefinger with your handkerchief. The finger will make you look thoughtful."[49]

Be Ready for the Spontaneous Questions

If you have done your preparation, you will be ready to answer all the questions a reporter might have. But here is a trick to use when a spontaneous question is asked that you were not expecting: Quickly bridge the question to a previous question or answer, or to a response that you wanted to make but were not given the opportunity. With your thought in mind, develop two or three quick statements that support or clarify your thought. Now state your ideas in a quick 30-second or one-minute response.

Let Your Body Talk

A large percentage of our information about the world comes from nonverbal cues. In interviews, the nonverbal image is extremely important. Avoid defensive-looking body language. This can take the form of clenched fists, tightened facial expressions, crossed arms, or poor eye contact. Learn to relax your body, sit in a comfortable and professional manner, and wear a warm facial expression. Here are some nonverbal expressions that are important to remember:

- Use natural hand gestures to highlight your points;
- Maintain good eye contact with the interviewer;
- Stay alert physically, even when you are not talking;
- Lean forward slightly in your chair. Do not swivel about; and
- Rest your hands naturally in your lap.[50]

Try to Ignore the Cameras

The technicians and director will take the shots they want, and you should keep your attention focused on the interviewer. The exception to this guideline is when you want to directly address the television audience. At that point, look and talk directly into the camera lens that has the red light. Even when the light is off continue to stay alert because another camera may be on you. Don't try to see yourself on the monitor. Often there is a time delay between the picture and your voice. This asynchrony can be very distracting and can cause you to lose your train of thought.[51] Have someone videotape your performance for your later viewing.

If you are delivering a prepared statement to the press, avoid reading your material. You can look at your notes from time to time, but leave the impression that you know precisely what you want to say. Likewise, if you are to use a TelePrompTer, distribute your eye contact from side to side or from one TelePrompTer to another. Keep a light, pleasant look on your face and a natural smile that you would give to an ordinary speech audience. While you are seeing words through the screen prompters, your audience is only seeing your image. Your facial expression should convey a very professional look.

Display Confidence in Your Voice

Develop a professional sound. Ordinary conversational tones are the best. Keep a consistent volume and rate. Avoid letting your voice drop at the end of sentences. Also avoid displaying anger or high emotion. Maintaining an erect posture and good breath control while talking can help you through the rough spots. Remember, you are the expert.

If you are to use a microphone, ask for a microphone check before you start talking. This will help you determine how loud to talk. If you use a lavalier microphone (one attached to the lapel or tie), avoid coughing, crossing your arms, or slapping your chest. While you do not hear it, your audience will receive a big bang each time such actions occur. Assume that your microphone is always "live," even during cut-aways to commercials.

Post-Interview Evaluation Questions

Following each press or media interview, you should evaluate your performance. The information gathered will prove valuable as you prepare for future interviews. Talk through the following questions alone and with your staff and colleagues. Take careful notes; they will be helpful during the next preparation stage.

1. Prior to the interview, did you take the reporter for granted? If so, what was the result?
2. Did you assume that the reporter understood the issue? Did he or she? If not, what was the impact?
3. Did you anticipate that the reporter might oppose or support your position? Which position did he or she actually take?
4. Before the interview were you prepared to defend your position through a fair and accurate rebuttal?
5. Did you start the interview by presenting your most important news?
6. Did you answer the questions directly and briefly, or did you occasionally get off-track and get into too much depth?
7. Did you allow the reporter to get away from the point of the interview?
8. Did you find yourself answering questions that you knew nothing about?
9. Did you use positive instead of negative words?
10. Were you able to build bridges to your desired answers?

11. Was the reporter overt or covert in nature?
12. Were you familiar with your material?
13. Before the interview did you feel reluctant, enthusiastic, or neutral about meeting the media?
14. Were you bothered by the studio lights, the use of the microphone, the clothing you wore, the heat, or your posture?
15. What specific things do you want to change before your next interview?

Summary

Today every business manager needs to perfect his or her media management skills. These new and important skills complement what we have described in earlier chapters where we noted the importance of writing letters and reports and of making regular business presentations and public speeches. Increasingly, managers are drawn into writing press releases and must clearly and convincingly give press and media interviews.

The first part of this chapter introduced you to a proactive process of using press releases that invite a working relationship with the media. Ten rules for good press releases were suggested, and numerous examples of actual press releases were displayed. Also discussed was the use of the Internet Web site as an archive for company press releases, and the option of placing releases on video. By building a positive relationship with the media during ordinary business times, your organization can gain image impact and can have a possible safety net in case a crisis develops.

The second section of the chapter turned the attention to applying a developed communication strategy when a crisis hits. The importance of the initial company statement was described, and the necessity to post and update information about the crisis event on the company Web site. This section concluded with the steps to follow in assuring the holding of a proper press conference.

The third section focused on media interviews. At the moment you give an interview, you become "the company." Both your individual credibility and the company image are on the line. With the proper work you can be a star. Your success depends on five important steps: previewing, preparing, practicing, performing, and evaluating the interview. Before you can prepare for the interview you must know why an interview is needed and who will be interviewing you. Check the record and style of the reporter before you respond to an unsolicited call. If a crisis is involved, make sure you are the person who should really address the issue. If there is someone with more authority on or knowledge of the subject, let that individual give the interview. Once you agree to the interview, avoid developing a negative mindset. Maintain a positive picture of how you will convey exciting and useful information. From that moment through the preparation stages you should have a media initiative that will help you discover the correct steps to take.

The preparation stage is more important than the actual interview. First, you should clearly understand both of your audiences: the interviewer and the public. Next, organize the thoughts and ideas you want to convey. With the help of your staff or colleagues anticipate the topics and questions you might be asked, starting with the most difficult. From those questions, develop complete answers. Decide upon the most important news based on your organization's aims and your perception of the public's needs, desires, and wants; then lead with it. Word your message with care, avoiding jargon and employing positive words. Learn to build bridges from the questions that are asked by the interviewer to the statements that you wish to make. Develop a style for handling the tough and tricky questions. More important, learn how to turn negative questions into positive answers.

Before interviews, as before business presentations or public speeches, practice is extremely important. Knowing what you are going to say and saying it are two different things. Media interviews often require that you talk in 30-second statements and respond to tough and tricky questions. This is foreign to the way we usually interact or speak. Spend ample time practicing it with your staff, colleagues, or friends. The results will be well worth it.

After successful preparation and practice, the real performance is less threatening. Dress appropriately for the occasion. Learn to keep your cool during the interview regardless of the circumstances or interviewer's style. Convince your interviewer and the audience of your credibility with a confident voice and effective body language.

After you read this chapter, and before your press or media interview occurs, learn to observe the hundreds of people who are interviewed each day in the media. Be aware of what they do right and wrong. Learn from the worst and copy the best.

Discussion Questions

1. We know it is critical that an organization communicate with the media when a crisis develops—but why and how does a company build relationships and communicate with the media representatives during ordinary times?
2. The chapter opening had ten rules for developing press releases, and it displayed numerous examples of actual press releases from organizations. As you read that material, what tactics did you find that were the most impressive, and which were the least impressive? Of all the examples given, which ones do you believe were actually used by reporters in preparing media stories? Why?
3. Discuss the differences between print and Web releases. How does the Internet, as an interactive medium in which the company controls the flow of information, redefine the use of the release?
4. Video press releases have been popularly used by many organizations. On what occasion and for what purpose would you recommend that

an organization make use of this medium? What are ethical concerns in using VPRs?

5. As soon as a crisis hits, the media representatives become active in searching for information about organizations. What are some of the tactics that they use in gathering information? How can an organization aid the media, yet protect itself?
6. You may have a feeling of nervousness and discomfort when you take a call from a media representative. To help relieve these feelings, what are some of the things you should investigate or do prior to preparing for your interview? Good media interviews rarely occur spontaneously. Most are the result of lots of preparation. What are five things that a person who is waiting to be interviewed should do?
7. Some of the performance techniques for media interviews are basically the same as those you were encouraged to follow while making a business presentation. What are those primary techniques?

Communication in Action

1. You are serving as a volunteer for Like New, a not-for-profit resale store that is affiliated with a local charity. Merchandise is solicited from a very high-income part of town and is sold in the store, and the proceeds are then directed to a shelter for battered women with children. Donations have been down for several months, and the nonprofit organization is cutting its budget. The director knows you are taking a business communication course and asks you to write a press release for the store. The director believes the media will be receptive to a nonprofit's plea and that donations could be impacted.

   Your Assignment: Write the press release, stressing the following points:

   - All donations are used to fund a very worthy cause.
   - When last year's donations were sold it allowed $55,000 to be given to the women's shelter. With six months left on this year's budget, proceeds to the shelter have been only $16,000.
   - The funds that are given to the shelter help women buy medicine and groceries for themselves and their children.
   - Like New can use furniture, appliances, clothing, and toys.
   - Pickup of the items is available.
   - A tax-donation letter will be given to all donors.
   - Any items not sold within six weeks are donated to other local charities helping women and children.
2. Collect two business-related newspaper clippings from your local newspaper. Try to choose clippings that appear to be written by publicists or as press