Effective Risk Communication

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Sometimes taking risk is seeing how close we can get to the edge without falling off.

Risk Communication

Defined:
• Strategy and methods for communicating information about risk to its key audiences and its response to the views, emotional and other reactions of stakeholders; and
• The nonprofit’s approach to communicating information about and securing support for its risk management strategies
First Wednesday Webinar Series:
Risk Communication

3/2/2011

Key Rules
Adapted from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s “Seven Cardinal Rules” of Risk Communication

1. Accept and involve key stakeholder groups, including funders, clients and volunteers, as legitimate partners.
2. Plan carefully and evaluate your efforts.
3. Listen to the specific concerns of stakeholders.
4. Be honest, frank and open.
5. Coordinate and collaborate with other credible sources.
6. Meet the needs of the media.
7. Speak clearly and with compassion.

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Embracing Best Practices

Hang on a sec while I read the safety instructions.

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EFFECTIVE RISK COMMUNICATION

- Interpersonal and group communication
- Listening techniques
- Message analysis and development
- Vocal and physical delivery
- Conducting Effective Meetings
- Difficult Messages
- Communicating under pressure
- Overcoming apprehension

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Interpersonal and Group Communication

Communicating Effectively in a Sea of Doubt

Five Principles that Pave the Way

- Respect
- Honest feedback
- Recognition
- A voice
- Encouragement
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THE SINGLE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN COMMUNICATION IS THE ILLUSION THAT IT HAS TAKEN PLACE.

Why Communication is Important

- Inescapable
- Irreversible
- Complicated
- Contextual

Why Communication is Important

Listening Techniques

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Two ears . . . One mouth

- Active Listening/Reflective Listening
  - Eye contact
  - Body language
  - Response
  - Sincere desire to understand

Barriers to Active Listening

- Distractions
- Trigger words
- Vocabulary
- Limited attention span
- Cultural differences
  - Vocabulary
  - Misunderstandings/assumptions
  - Accents

Barriers (cont.)

- Personal interpretations
- Attitudes
- Biases
- Prejudices
Overcoming Listening Barriers

• Active listening
• Put aside emotions
• Ask questions and paraphrase back to the speaker to clarify
• Consider the speaker’s background
  – Cultural
  – Personal

Message Analysis and Development

The Message

• The content is the message
• The medium is the message
• The person is the message
Awareness and Comprehension Measurement
- Was the message received?
  - “Benchmarking”
  - Quantitative Measurements
  - Qualitative Measurements

Accountability
- The key word in organizations today is accountability, which means taking responsibility for achieving the performance promised.

Stakeholder Relations
- Brings people together
- Brings the plan to life
- Predicting questions can help you prepare
**Worst-Case Scenario Exercise**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worst Case Scenarios</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Revisions Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example Exposure: Swine Flu</td>
<td>How can I be assured that you are taking steps to protect my child?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What will you do if my child has cold symptoms?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How will you ensure that the organization's doors stay open if an outbreak occurs?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Messages Should be Realistic**

- What should people know?
- Is there qualitative or quantitative info available?
- Is there some way to gather information from experts that would help us better understand the risk?

**Messages Should be Realistic**

- Is there an interdisciplinary group that is available to point out barriers, weak spots, the actual people affected?
- Can we create a picture to describe the risk?
- What do we already know about the risk?
WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF INSANITY?

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.
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Communication Impact

- WORDS 7%
- TONE & PACE 38%
- PHYSIOLOGY 55%

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Appropriate Body Language

- Start with eye contact
- Smile!
- Express emotion with your facial muscles
- Avoid distracting mannerisms
- Telling a story?
- Stay true to your personality
- Make gestures convincing
- Vary your position

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Conducting Effective Meetings

Good News
- Meetings are empowering
- Meetings are a great way to communicate
- Meetings develop work skills and leadership
- Meetings are morale boosting

Bad News
- Meetings may not have focus
- Companies have too many meetings
- Attendees are unprepared
- Most meeting time is wasted

Effective Meetings Need to Have:
- Good structures
- Good processes
- Good leadership/facilitation
Eight Ways to Make Meetings Better

1. Be prepared
2. Have an agenda
3. Start on time and end on time
4. Have fewer (but better) meetings
5. Include, rather than exclude
6. Maintain the focus
7. Capture and assign action items
8. Get feedback

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Communicating a Difficult Message

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Integrity without knowledge is weak
EFFECTIVE RISK COMMUNICATION: SAY WHAT?
Integrity without knowledge is weak and useless, and knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.
Samuel Johnson 1709-1784
**Communicating a Difficult Message**

- Do your research and get the facts
- Define/understand your role
- Draft help/delegate

**Communicating a Difficult Message**

- Define target audiences
- Define message in threes
- Special considerations

**Communicating a Difficult Message**

- Determine communication vehicles
- Communicate
- Evaluate/Monitor

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Communicating Under Pressure

Communicating Skills Under Pressure

- When the going gets tough... the tough use humor
- Are you noticing other people?
- Can you meet them where they are?
- Responsible versus Responsible-able
- Is learning happening?

Five Secrets to “Thinking On Your Feet”

1. Listen
2. Pause to organize
3. Repeat the question
4. Focus on one main point and support it
5. Summarize and Stop (SAS)
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**Difficult Messages**

**A**
- Access to site is restricted to employees only – no family or friends permitted unless on company business in which case formal pass and security procedures to be followed.

**B**
- No employees are allowed to use personal cell phones during work hours.

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**Overcoming Apprehension**

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**Identify the Source...**

- Past performance failures
- Fear of rejection
- Low self-esteem
Public Speaking Anxiety

- The anxious anticipation to a situation that is unfamiliar or associated with past negative experiences.
  - Unfamiliar Situations
  - Past Negative Experiences

Symptoms of Anxiety: Feeling Out of Control

- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Shaking hands
- Heart beating hard and fast
- Quivering voice
- Sweating
- Shaking legs
- Inability to get the words out

Three Solutions

1. Practice, practice, practice
2. Use your anxiety during your speech
3. Do things that set you up for success
Building Confidence

- Baby steps
- Realistic goals
- Positive thoughts
- Know your topic, audience, yourself
- Know your speech
- Focus on the message, not yourself.

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