Risk Communication – Definition

“A Science-based Approach for Communicating Effectively in:

- High-Concern
- High Stress
- Emotionally Charged, or
- Controversial Situations”
• There is a large body of scientific knowledge

• Most of the skills involved are non-intuitive and non-instinctive and therefore must be acquired

• The key to success is preparedness
• 8000 Articles in Peer Reviewed Scientific Journals
• 2000 Books
• Reviews of the Literature by Major Scientific Organizations (e.g., US National Academy of Sciences; Royal Society of Great Britain)
“...the major public health challenges since 9/11 were not just clinical, epidemiological, technical, issues. The major challenges were communication. In fact, as we move into the 21st century, communication may well become the central science of public health practice.” (December, 2001) Edward Baker, MD, MPH, Assistant Surgeon General

CD ROM
Avoid Unnecessary Negatives
(No, Not, Never, Nothing, None)

Speak/write clearly (AGL-4)

For each issue, develop lists that represent 95% of stakeholder questions and concerns (95% Rule)
Do’s

• Prepare answers for all anticipated stakeholder questions and concerns
Risk Communication Timeline

BC 1970’s 2001
(Attention) (Risk) (Science)
(Span) (Perception)
Risk Communication Timeline

BC
(Attention Span)
------------------------
1970's
(Risk Perception)
2001
(Science)
Risk Communication

Goals

• Shared Knowledge

• Trust

• Informed, Ethical Decision Making
Risk Communication

- Message
- Messenger
- Means
Risk Communication

- Message
- Messenger
- Means
“When people are upset, they often have extreme difficulty:
(1) hearing;
(2) understanding, and
(3) remembering information.”

Implications?
Risk Communication

- Message
- Messenger
- Means
People judge the messenger before the message

People judge the messenger primarily in terms of trust

Information about trust comes from non-verbal communication, verbal communication, and actions
Risk Communication

- Message
- Messenger
- Means
The larger and more diverse the audience, the less effective the communication.

Implications?
“Facts about the actual risk play virtually no role in public perceptions and decisions about risks, concerns, or worries. What does play a role are factors such as trust, benefits, and control.”

Implications?
“When people are upset, they often have extreme difficulty:
(1) hearing;
(2) understanding, and
(3) remembering information.”

Implications?
Messages

- 95% Rule
- Rule of Three
- AGL-4
95% Rule

“95% of all questions and concerns that will be raised by any stakeholder in any controversy can be predicted in advance.”

Implications?
Identifying Stakeholders and Their Specific Concerns

- Historical Record (e.g., meeting documents; media reports; logs)
  - Specific
  - Related
  - General

- Subject-matter experts
- Role Playing
Categories of Concerns and Issues

- Health issues
- Safety issues
- Economic issues, e.g.,
  -- Property values
  -- Housing
  -- Employment
  -- Tourism
  -- Business
- Environmental issues
- Wildlife Issues
- Quality of life issues
- Legal issues
- Trust/Credibility issues
- Information/Communication/Notification issues
- Ethical issues
- Technical issues
- Administrative issues
- Process/Procedural issues
- Roles/Responsibility issues
- Historical issues
- Religious issues
- Responsiveness issues
- Educational issues
- Psychological issues
- Policy Issues
- Ethnic/Diversity issues
- Cultural issues
- Fairness/Equity issues
- Recreational Issues
- Political issues
- Pet issues
# Concerns – Risk Perception

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<thead>
<tr>
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• 95% Rule

• Rule of Three

• AGL-4
Classical (BC) Research Results:

Rule of Three Template

• 3 Messages Repeated 3 Times
Classical (BC) Research Results: Rule of Three Template

Message Maps (Layered/Tiered Triplet Messages)
### Message Map

**Stakeholder:**

**Question/Concern:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Message/Fact</th>
<th>Keywords: Supporting Fact 1.1</th>
<th>Keywords: Supporting Fact 2.1</th>
<th>Keywords: Supporting Fact 3.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Keywords: Supporting Fact 1.2</td>
<td>Keywords: Supporting Fact 2.2</td>
<td>Keywords: Supporting Fact 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Keywords: Supporting Fact 1.3</td>
<td>Keywords: Supporting Fact 2.3</td>
<td>Keywords: Supporting Fact 3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Message/Fact</td>
<td>Supportive Message/Fact</td>
<td>Message/Fact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong> I came</td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 1.1 \nLong journey</td>
<td>The journey was long and hard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 1.2 \nHeavy Losses</td>
<td>We suffered heavy losses along the way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 1.3 \nArrived safely</td>
<td>Despite the difficulties, we arrived safely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong> I saw</td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 2.1 \nLarge armies</td>
<td>The enemy armies were large.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 2.2 \nWell armed</td>
<td>They were well armed and equipped.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 2.3 \nWell positioned</td>
<td>They were well positioned.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong> I conquered</td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 3.1 \nEngage</td>
<td>We engaged them immediately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 3.2 \nFought bravely</td>
<td>Our legions fought bravely.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Keywords:</strong> Supporting Fact 3 \nDefeated enemy</td>
<td>The enemy is (totally) defeated.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Message Maps: Uses

- Information Forums
- Fact Sheets
- Press Releases
- Video Scripts
- Scripts for Hot Lines
- Web sites
Information Forum

From: Risk Communication PowerPoint Slides, Vincent T. Covello, Ph.D., Director, Center for Risk Communication/Consortium for Risk and Crisis Communication
Classical (BC) Research Results:

Rule of Three Template

- 3 Messages Repeated 3 Times
  -- TTT
  -- Formats (e.g., written, visual)
  -- Channels (e.g., fact sheets, web site, video)
Overarching Message Map (O Map)

• Addresses:
  – What should people know about “x”
  – What you want them to know about “x” regardless of questions asked
  – What you would put in your opening statement about “x”

• Be sure it gets delivered
  – “Bridge” to it if necessary: e.g., “I want to remind you again…”

• Serves as a “A port in a storm”
• 95% Rule

• Rule of Three

• AGL-4
AGL-4 Template (Message Clarity Rule)

Average Grade Level Minus 4

Exceptions:

-- Words that are defined in clear language

-- Words that would be well understood by the target audience
Templates

1) AGL-4
2) CCO
3) 27/9/3
4) IDK
5) ...
6) ...
Message Templates:
CCO Template
Trust Factors in High Concern Situations

Listening/Caring/ Empathy 50%

Competence/ Expertise 15-20%

Dedication/ Commitment 15-20%

Honesty/ Openness 15-20%

Assessed in first 30 seconds
CCO Template (Churchill)

- Compassion
- Conviction
- Optimism
Templates

1) AGL-4
2) CCO
3) 27/9/3
4) IDK
5) ...
6) ...
27/9/3 Template

- 27 words
- 9 seconds
- 3 messages
Exceptions

-- Definitions (6-10 additional words)
-- Names of Organizations (count as one word)
-- Phrases (count as one word)
Risk Communication

2x Enhancements (doubles the time or space) to 27/9/3’s

-- Visuals

-- Story telling

-- Message Support from Credible 3rd Parties
Templates

1) AGL-4
2) CCO
3) 27/9/3
4) IDK
5) 
6) 

...
I.D.K. (I Don’t Know) Template:

Short Form

- Say You Don’t Know/Can’t Answer/Wish You Could Answer*

- Give the Reason Why You Don’t Know or Can’t Answer*

- Indicate Follow Up with Deadline*
I.D.K. (I Don’t Know) Template:

**Uses**

- You are not prepared to answer
- You are not the expert
- You are not the responsible party
- You don’t have information or data (e.g., it is being investigated)
- You are limited in what can say (e.g., national security; litigation; privacy)
I.D.K. (I Don’t Know) Template: Short Form

☞ Say You Don’t Know/Can’t Answer/Wish You Could Answer*

☞ Give the Reason Why You Don’t Know or Can’t Answer*

☞ Indicate Follow Up with Deadline*
I.D.K. (I Don’t Know) Template

- Acknowledge/Repeat the Question
- Say You Don’t Know/Can’t Answer/Wish You Could Answer*
- Give the Reason(s) Why You Don’t Know or Can’t Answer*
- Indicate Follow Up with Deadline*
- Bridge to What You Can Say
Non-Verbal Communication

- 75% Rule
- Negative Dominance
- Cultural Meaning
75% Rule

- People judge the messenger before the message
- People judge the messenger primarily in terms of trust
- 75% or more of information about trust comes from non-verbal communication
• 75 % Rule
Classical (BC) Research Results: Trust Factors

- Listening/Caring/Empathy: 50%
- Competence/Expertise: 15-20%
- Dedication/Commitment: 15-20%
- Honesty/Openness: 15-20%

Assessed in first 30 seconds
Trust

Non-Verbal Communication

• 75% Rule
• Negative Dominance
• Cultural Meaning
Risk Communication - Non-Verbal Communication

- Eyes
- Hands
- Posture
Risk Communication - Non-Verbal Communication

- **Eyes**
  -- Eye contact

- **Hands**
  -- Visible; waist level; small movements

- **Posture**
  -- Slight lean forward; relaxed; avoid repetitive motions
Risk Communication Timeline

BC (Attention Span) 1970’s (Risk Perception) 2001 (Science)
Risk Communication -
1970’s: Research Results

• Risk Perceptions
• Negative Dominance
Risk Communication - 1970’s: Research Results

- Risk Perceptions
- Negative Dominance
“Facts about the actual risk play virtually no role in public perceptions and decisions about risks, concerns, or worries. What does play a role are factors such as trust, benefits, and control.”

Implications?
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<td>Memorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Moral/ethical</td>
<td>Immoral/unethical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Clear non-verbal message</td>
<td>Mixed non-verbal message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Responsive</td>
<td>Unresponsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Random/scattered</td>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Little media attention</td>
<td>Much media attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Victims statistical</td>
<td>Victims identifiable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Immediate effects</td>
<td>Delayed effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Effect reversible</td>
<td>Effect irreversible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Scientifically well understood</td>
<td>Non scientifically well understood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Amplification Weights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>1000</td>
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Risk Communication -

1970's: Research Results

- Risk Perceptions
- Negative Dominance
1970’s: Research Results

Negative Dominance

1N = 3P
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Risk Communication-2001

- Science
- Templates
- Stakeholders
Risk Communication - 2001

- Science
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“...the major public health challenges since 9/11 were not just clinical, epidemiological, technical, issues. The major challenges were communication. In fact, as we move into the 21st century, communication may well become the central science of public health practice.” (December, 2001) Edward Baker, MD, MPH, Assistant Surgeon General
Risk Communication Science

- Literature Reviews/Knowledge Compendiums
- Performance Standards/Best Practice
- Performance Accountability
Strategy—First Steps

**Step 1**
1) Identify Concerns/Issues
2) Identify/Profile Stakeholders
3) Identify Questions/Concerns

**Step 2**
1) Develop Messages
2) Coordinate Messages
3) Identify and Train Spokespeople
Risk Communication - 2001

- Science
- Templates
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<td>5) 1N = 3P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Primacy/Recency</td>
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Additional Templates

• Guarantee Template
• False Allegation Template
• Worst Case Template
Guarantee Template

Do:
• Talk about what you can factually guarantee, promise, assure, or tell
• Tell people three factual things
• Focus on factual processes, procedures, or actions; not outcomes

Avoid:
• Saying that “there are no guarantees” or that “there are guarantees.”
Guarantee Template

Long Form

“You’ve asked me about the future.”

“The best way I can talk about the future is to talk about the past and present.”

“What the past and present tell us is…(tell people three things)”
Additional Templates

- Guarantee Template
- False Allegation Template
- Worst Case Template
False Allegation Template

- Identify, acknowledge, and state the opposite of the false allegation
- Validate/affirm the opposite of the allegation
- Indicate three things that you have, are, or will do to maximize/achieve the opposite of the allegation
False Allegation Template:

**Do:** Do talk about, who you are, what you are, or what you are doing.

**Avoid:** Repeating false negatives or talking about who you are not, what you are not, or what you are not doing.
Additional Templates

• Guarantee Template
• False Allegation
• Worst Case Template
Worst Case Template

State that the question is a “What if” question.

Indicate that it is generally more useful to focus on “What is”

Indicate three facts that respond to the concern, e.g., (1) emergency response; (2) containment; (3) prevention.
Risk and Change Management Communication – Definition

“A Science-based Approach for Communicating Effectively in:

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- Emotionally Charged, or
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