ARE YOU READY?
Build your crisis communication plan now—before you need it

14 anticipate risks
Prepare a solid crisis plan long before the skies darken.

20 you cannot control a crisis; you can control your response
The key is to be able to “pick the panic.”

24 reaching global alignment during difficult times
To protect reputation and brand, global stakeholder alignment—from local employees to international media—is critical.

30 a precarious business
Microblogging is booming in China, but with it come new threats to corporate reputation.

33 the simple facts
5 ways to get noticed online in the Chinese market.

36 the right chemistry
In India, Tata Chemicals connected teachers, students and industry to promote chemistry.
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**CONFERENCE DETAILS AND REGISTRATION:**
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http://www.iabc.com/education/cm/
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Measures of control

Lately I can’t seem to get enough information about the universe. Yes, by universe I mean all of that space and time out there that we don’t really understand. It makes me realize that the earth and everything on it is so small. Somehow knowing that there’s this whole vast universe out there puts everything in perspective and makes it easier to take on challenges. It also instills a measure of humility that forces us to be comfortable with a certain amount of discomfort. There are so many things we can’t control—like the fact that by some accounts the world will come to an abrupt end soon, perhaps by some celestial body crashing down upon us on a fine December day.

Now, I don’t know about you, but I say we make the most of it. With so much out there that we can’t control, why not focus on what we can control and not worry about the rest? When it comes to an organizational crisis, there is much that is within our control. Maintaining that control, however, is much more likely if we plan our strategy long before a crisis happens. It starts with understanding our organization, considering its vulnerabilities and thinking through our possible reactions. This issue of CW features well-known thought leaders on crisis communication who share their insights on what to consider prior to a potential crisis and how to respond when it happens. The idea is that when the worst imaginable scenario actually occurs, we can apply our best thinking to work through the problem. These authors explain that we do have a measure of control, but only if we prepare properly. So, while there is so much that is out of our control, we do have the ability to arm ourselves with knowledge and take charge in every possible way.

As for the rest, we will have to learn to let go. The earth and everything on it may be just a small speck, but it offers a journey full of awesome challenges and breathtaking opportunities. Let’s prepare for the next challenge and enjoy the trip.

Natasha Nicholson, Executive Editor
A more responsive IABC

Improved digital offerings top Executive Director Chris Sorek’s plans for the future

"Being able to personalize our digital offering will make it possible for members to more quickly access information where and when they need it.”

—Chris Sorek

IABC’s new executive director, Christopher Sorek, brings a wealth of experience and knowledge of the communication profession. In this interview with CW, he outlines his expectations for the association and for the industry.

CW: What drew you to the executive director position at IABC?
Chris Sorek: With more than 30 years in communication, I felt this was an opportunity to help the profession and help professionals. IABC as a global organization offers its members unprecedented access to content, as well as a network of professionals who are there to help each other.

CW: You’ve worked in both corporate and nonprofit organizations. What are some unique lessons from those worlds that you will apply at IABC?
CS: There are a couple of constants that apply across all industries. First, you need to know who you work for and what they need. Stakeholder relations are a critical element for success. There is no doubt when you work for the Red Cross/Red Crescent [where Sorek worked in 2001], you work for the most vulnerable every day. No question. When you work in the private sector, you have customers. Both have other stakeholders, including funders, bankers and investors; employees and volunteers; and governments and communities, among others. The bottom line is that there is someone we all...
ultimately work for, and at IABC, for me, it is our members. Second, we all get “rated” one way or another. It could be by the number of vaccinations given or people helped, or by the services and professional development we provide. It is my responsibility to ensure that we deliver.

**CW:** What do you believe is the best way to communicate with a global audience whose members play diverse roles in communication?

**CS:** A key channel of communication in the future is digital. Our digital footprint is clearly the best way to reach more members, and provide them with the products and support they need on a daily basis. Being able to personalize our digital offering will make it possible for members to more quickly access information where and when they need it. I also think meeting members through face-to-face meetings is important. Events like the World Conference and other meetings are great, but unfortunately, it’s hard to meet everyone.

**CW:** What do you believe is the greatest value IABC offers to professional communicators?

**CS:** There are two great values: phenomenal content and professional development that helps build careers. These are the two most powerful “deliverables” from IABC. The content connects members to solutions and ideas, as well as other members, and professional development helps members move up their career ladders. Combine these with a network of professionals that you can rely on, and it makes IABC a valuable asset for all members.

**CW:** What are your major objectives for your first year?

**CS:** I would like us to be able to be more responsive to members’ needs. That will include improving our digital presence by making it personal, simple to use and a valuable resource. On the digital front, Gold Quill Awards entries and judging will be done via the Internet. We are starting to see some real movement in updating our accreditation program. And our shift to digital will have an impact on a number of areas. First, it will enable us to provide a more comprehensive information package to members. Second, we will be able to supply a more personalized approach to information sharing.

I also look forward to working with the board and its committees to ensure we improve across the board in terms of service and support. We are looking at metrics that will tell us how well we are doing. How long are people spending on our website, where are they going, how are they accessing information, and what do they do with it once they have it? Our performance and customer service must get top marks all of the time. And how can we anticipate what members will need in the future?

I would also like to see what metrics make the most sense to gauge the effectiveness of what we are doing, while at the same time helping us become a learning organization that builds on insights. This means that I will probably never say that we are successful, but rather that we are constantly improving against set targets.

**CW:** How will you gauge success?

**CS:** The success of our organization will be determined by a number of factors. We need to be adding value for members and helping them develop as professionals. This is where the career and content pillars of our strategy come into play. What are the services and programs that members need? What is the best way to deliver them? And how can we anticipate what members will need in the future?

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**CW:** Would you describe a challenging communication situation that you faced and overcame?

**CS:** There have been a number over the past 30 years. One that comes to mind is when I was asked to develop a communication strategy for an organization. I asked senior management to meet with me and list all of the issues that they felt communication would need to address. Within 60 minutes I had recorded and posted on white paper around the room 152 diff-

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**rewarding best practices in chapter management**

Has your chapter excelled in member recruitment, professional development, marketing communication, or all of the above in the past year? Be sure to enter IABC’s 2013 Chapter Management Awards. The Chapter Management Awards recognize leadership abilities, management skills, creativity and teamwork of outstanding chapter leaders worldwide. Categories include membership marketing, community involvement, professional development and more. The deadline for entries is 28 November 2012. 

[www.iabc.com/leaders/cma/](http://www.iabc.com/leaders/cma/)
different issues. To try to shrink the list I asked them to vote, individually, on the topics they felt were the most critical. I gave each member five blue dots that they could place either on five different topics or in any combination (two on one topic and three on another, etc.). In 15 minutes, they had boiled down the list to 15 items. After some discussion we saw that the 15 could be captured under four major categories. So within two hours we went from 152 different topics to four. Ultimately, this exercise helped the organization focus its mission, its management and our key messages. We became known for those four things. Our thought leadership program echoed them. And everything everyone did was captured under those four areas. So a very difficult communication situation helped the organization solve a strategic question while making my job easier.

IABC puts a new shine on Gold Quill

Long before the winners of the 2012 Gold Quill Awards were honored at the World Conference in Chicago in June, work was under way to lift the program to even greater heights. Redesigned for 2013, the program responds to calls for stronger feedback on entries, more categories and an easier entry process.

“Gold Quill is a multifaceted flagship program that supports all three pillars of our strategic plan: career, content and business,” says IABC Chair Kerby Meyers. “It offers opportunities for recognition and professional development, provides content that contributes to our body of knowledge, and provides revenue that supports our continued ability to provide member services and benefits. After 40 years it was time to overhaul the program. The changes couldn’t be more timely or appropriate as we work toward building a future that’s more responsive and relevant to member needs on all levels.”

Along with accreditation and professional development, Gold Quill is one of three programs under the wing of IABC’s Career Roadmap Committee, a high-level international group appointed by former Chair Adrian Cropley, ABC, to improve and align key member offerings.

Online research was conducted to determine overall awareness of the program and the specific needs and expectations of entrants. The survey explored the reasons why people enter or don’t, the perceived value of the program, preferred communication channels and vehicles for entrants, whether there was enough time to prepare an entry, what types of tools are needed to enable success, and whether existing categories covered the full spectrum of the work being done by communication professionals and were aligned with professional development needs. The research also looked at the value of aligning IABC awards programs at the chapter, regional and international levels.

The research determined that the main reason people enter the Gold Quill Awards is to build reputation, and a significant majority said the program’s value is to build personal credibility. Others cited the benefit of benchmarking their work against global excellence and its value as a professional development program.

When asked why they didn’t enter, a majority of respondents said they were too busy or that putting together an entry is too time-consuming. Respondents called for a streamlined process, more tools and information

mark your calendar

1–3 November Conference (Ottawa, Ontario): Canada Region Conference
7 November Web seminar: Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement: Are You Guilty of Either One? (Free to IABC members)
12–13 November Conference (New York City): 2012 IABC & PRIME Research Communication Research and Measurement Conference
18–20 November Conference (Melbourne, Australia): World Public Relations Forum, IABC Track
28 November Web seminar: From Email to Infographics: Why Visually Enhancing Your Communication Is Critical in Today’s Business Environment
5–6 December Conference (Scottsdale, Arizona): 2012 Strategic Communication Leadership Conference

For more information about these and other events, go to www.iabc.com/education.

IABC puts a new shine on Gold Quill

Online entry process, new categories and judging standards debut for the 2013 awards competition

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delivered through different communication vehicles and channels, a longer entry period, and the ability to enter online. A majority said a broader offering of divisions and categories would influence their decision to enter as well.

“Ongoing research over the past 18 months showed that evaluation at the Tier 1 level was inconsistent,” Meyers says. “Untrained evaluators were unsure about how to interpret and apply the 7-point global scale of excellence. The research confirmed that entrants were frustrated with the quality of evaluation, and this was eroding the credibility of the program, and that of IABC.”

In response, the IABC executive board approved a new designation to ensure that only trained and qualified evaluators review awards entries. Through training and testing, IABC members will be eligible to earn the title “International Awards Evaluator in Good Standing,” and may participate in one of five global Blue Ribbon Panels. Over the past 18 months, evaluator training has been delivered in the U.S. (Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis, Minnesota); in Canada (Vancouver, British Columbia; Regina, Saskatchewan; and St. John’s, Newfoundland); in Melbourne, Australia; and in Pretoria, South Africa.

Check out all the 2013 program enhancements at www.iabc.com/gq.

Calling all IABC leaders to Scottsdale, Arizona
IABC’s annual Leadership Institute is coming to Scottsdale, Arizona, 7–9 February, at the Hilton Scottsdale Resort and Villas.

IABC chapter, regional and international leaders will have the opportunity to share best practices and learn how to create programs and services that keep members involved. Sessions will focus on topics such as:

- Building membership.
- Developing a volunteer pool.

All current and potential IABC leaders are encouraged to attend.

If your chapter is new or in need of financial assistance to send leaders to the Leadership Institute, you may be eligible for a scholarship. Interested chapters should fill out an online application by 14 December. The scholarship fund is limited, so priority will be given to chapters that are most in need.


Save the date: 2013 IABC World Conference heads to New York City

Mark your calendar now to experience IABC’s biggest event of the year in the city that never sleeps. More than 1,400 professional communicators from all over the world will gather in New York City from 23–26 June for the 2013 IABC World Conference.

The conference will showcase the best of the marketing and communication profession, featuring leaders and experts who are creating new ways of thinking about communication in the expanding global economy and developing unique approaches to the new financial environment. There is no better city to be the backdrop for the innovative and game-changing thinking of today’s communication professionals as they tackle some of the decade’s toughest challenges head-on. Just as New York City has rebuilt itself over the past decade, leaders in the communication profession are reinventing themselves to survive and thrive in the new world economy.

The conference program and registration information will be online in early December, with the lowest registration rates offered through 31 January. Watch this space or www.iabc.com/wc for details.

the new gold quill: expanded entry period
This year, the Gold Quill Awards program is accepting entries from 5 October 2012 to 8 March 2013, providing an extra six weeks for you to carefully prepare your entry. Find complete 2013 program details at www.iabc.com/gq.
For far too many, the temptation to start sharing images as an organizational communication activity results in a tactic in search of a strategy. Are you taking one of the latest online communication trends for granted? Visual communication via static images is hot—though it’s not especially new. The first web browser, Mosaic, let people post images, so photo sharing goes back nearly 20 years. As faster bandwidth and remote storage became cheaper and more common, people started storing and sharing their photos on sites like Photobucket and Flickr. Facebook built its success in part by serving as an intermediary for people who wanted to show their pictures to their friends. But only recently has visual communication become a craze. The sudden and indisputable successes of Pinterest and Instagram indicate that something is going on, something different than the ho-hum digitization of analog photo albums and 35mm slide carousels. And it’s not just friends sharing vacation photos. Organizations are beginning to see the potential value of these sites to connect with consumers—but only when the

Organizations are beginning to recognize promotional value in Pinterest (right) and similar sites.
posted images resonate with the intended audience.

Photo sharing as a social activity

Instagram, an almost entirely mobile tool, boasts 80 million users. They share their photos with friends, colleagues, family, even complete strangers who opt to follow them, Twitter-like. Those photos—to which easy-to-use filters can be applied—can also be routed to Facebook and Twitter for broader sharing.

This probably sounds counterintuitive to anyone who remembers sitting through interminable vacation slide shows at a friend's house. There are big differences, though. First, you can choose whose photos you want to see—there's no obligation to follow anybody. Second, you peruse the photos when it's convenient for you. Third, it's not a passive activity. You can see how many other people liked an image, show it your own love, read the comments others have left and leave your own. It's a social activity.

Pinterest is also image-based. At its heart, Pinterest is no different than Delicious and a host of other social-bookmarking sites. Pinterest, though, uses images as bookmarks—far more compelling to peruse than the blue, underlined links of other bookmarking services.

Infoposters are yet another form of image-based communication that is experiencing a surge in growth. (While most of these information-stuffed images are labeled infographics, they're not. An infographic is a visual representation of information, data or knowledge. As visual design consultant Connie Malamed explains, “Infographics tend to be abstract visuals. They compress information and make it manageable....They help us see information in new ways, which gives us greater insight for understanding and problem solving.” Infoposters, as Malamed calls them, convey “multiple segments of information typically using words and numbers to represent quantitative data.”) Everyone, it seems, is producing or sharing long, scrolling infoposters.

Finally, there is the trend of slapping some clever text (or text that somebody thought was clever) over an image and posting it to places like Google+ and Facebook.

The best explanation I've heard for the sudden and intense popularity of image-based communication came from photographer Trey Ratcliff during a stint on the technology podcast This Week in Tech. The lives most of us lead don't lend themselves to much visual discovery, he said. We're bound to offices, homes and cars. Once, however—and not that long ago—we walked through the world, taking in everything.

Food for thought

Not only are people engaged more with images, they also are taking photos they never would have taken before, just to share with others. Entire categories of photography have emerged. There are photos of funny and odd signage. Photos of interesting shapes. But nothing has taken off like photos of food. People are sharing images of their restaurant meals and their home-cooked edibles.

The picture-sharing phenomenon is even influencing older models. A great example: the “IABC Eats” Facebook group, where more than 200 IABC members share posts about food, most of which include pictures. Scrolling through the group as I write this, I find immediate past Chair Adrian Cropley’s photo of a bowl of coffee (at right), Martha Muzychka’s picture of peppers flash-fried in olive oil and sprinkled with coarse salt (a Galician delicacy), and Alexander Taratov’s shot of various dips from Rumi’s Kitchen in Atlanta (Persian cuisine), to name just a few.

As on Instagram, there is considerable engagement on IABC Eats. You're welcome to join in, by the way.

—S.H.
Make sure you establish a visual identity so that people begin to associate the look and feel of your graphics with your organization.

around us as we did. When we scroll through pins on Pinterest and images on Instagram, we recapture some of that. On Instagram right now, I see landscapes shrouded in clouds; bowling pins; the back of a semi on a highway; a sign welcoming visitors to Silver Beach, Michigan; a sold-out crowd at the London Olympic Games; a Lego umbrella; and a child sitting behind a dozen or so ice cream pops she made. The popularity of online images has inspired the launches of dozens of new services. Pinterest alternatives have names like Jux, Fancy, We Heart It, Gentlemint and Clipboard. Instagram has spawned Flixel, Lightbox and Molome, not to mention a flood of photo-editing mobile apps.

Keep your focus
With this near-fixation on images, it’s tempting for communicators to jump into the fray. A lot of companies already have, some in a big way. Before you do, though, consider the judging criteria for IABC’s Gold Quill Awards program, which are just as appropriate in this context. For entries in the Communication Skills category, judges are asked to determine (among other things):

- **How clearly** are the need and its effect on the organization identified?
- **How clearly** are the critical characteristics of the audience identified?
- **How well** do the goals and objectives meet the stated need?
- **To what extent** does the overall solution demonstrate a strategic or creative approach to business communication?

For far too many, the temptation to start sharing images as an organizational communication activity results in a tactic in search of a strategy. In a blog post, Internet Society content strategist Dan York asked, “Do the images help educate your audiences about your products? Your mission? Your services? Do they help humanize your organization and show a more personal side? Or show the people behind the name? Do they entertain or amuse people and help build your community? Do they inspire people because of how beautiful or artistic they are? Do they promote your brand name or social account? Will you gain more followers/fans/etc.?”

There are good examples of organizations that clearly are thinking strategically with their visual communication. Red Bull, for example, uses Instagram to share photos of extreme sports activities that serve as the milieu for the company’s entire marketing campaign. Sharpie, the manufacturer of permanent markers, shares photos of drawings made with its pens. On Pinterest, one of General Electric’s most popular pinboards is titled Badass Machines, a look at some of “the biggest and baddest technologies produced by GE,” a reminder that the company has a large B-to-B component and makes some pretty impressive, massive stuff.

Some organizations have opted to focus more on their customers’ images than their own. NH Hotels asked its guests to “capture a moment when something is beginning, a zero instant” and share it on Instagram with the hashtag #WakeUpPics, a spin on the hotel’s slogan, “Wake up to a better world.” More than 14,000 photos were submitted, and the winners received luxury vacation packages.

As for infographics and infoposters, people will soon grow weary of ceaselessly scrolling through towers of text and data. If you take the infoposter approach, try to keep it short and simple. Better yet, put in the time and effort with someone who knows what he or she is doing to create a true infographic that displays quantitative information. Whatever you do, make sure you establish a visual identity so that people begin to associate the look and feel of your graphics with your organization. Nobody has done a better job of this than eMarketer, with its distinctive red-and-black motif that, despite the simplicity of these very basic charts, is instantly recognizable.

By all means, have fun delving into the emerging world of visual online communication. In fact, you should get started now, if you haven’t already. Which brings me back to the main point: Approach visual communication like every other tactic you employ as a business communicator, so that it helps achieve a business goal. As social media expert and Edelman Senior Vice President Steve Rubel predicted in *AdAge Digital*, “Businesses that bank on visual storytelling with images will win.”

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**about the author**
Shel Holtz, ABC, IABC Fellow, is principal of Holtz Communication + Technology in Concord, California.
W
elcomes to the final installment of our Seven Deadly Sins series. It’s been a lot of fun talking about the sins that organizational writers commit on an almost daily basis: writing for the wrong audience, loading stories with jargon, burying the most interesting stuff, packaging our content poorly, writing too much when we don’t need to, and getting (or making up) really lousy quotes that make our sources sound like robots.

In this, the final sermon, we take on the last of the deadly sins: writing content that has no specificity. Corporate writers tend to create content filled with vague quotes and endless corporate babble, but no real examples or anecdotes. They write stories and press releases loaded with jargon and organizational boilerplate, but leave out the interesting details that might make people actually want to read the damn thing.

Lucky for you, there’s an easy fix to the problem. If you want to purge yourself of this sin forever, you just need to read the Bible.

No, not that Bible. I’m talking about what I consider to be the writer’s Bible: Strunk and White’s The Elements of Style. The great E.B. White wrote the book with his old college professor, William Strunk Jr., and it presents a set of rules for writers.

When I teach writing seminars with my partner, Jim Ylisela, we use examples from The Elements of Style all the time. And one of our favorites has to do with specificity.

Strunk and White’s Rule No. 16 for better writing states: “Prefer the specific to the general, the definite to the vague, the concrete to the abstract.”

Here is the example they use to illustrate their point. Which sentence do you think is better?

1. A period of unfavorable weather set in.
2. It rained every day for a week.

Of course the second one is better. And why? It’s more specific. It has concrete details. The second sentence is the way a good communicator would describe the weather. The first sentence is what happens during the approval process, when the lawyers get hold of the copy.

The conversation would probably go something like this:

**Communicator:** Have you had a chance to look at my story on the weather affecting our wood pulping plant’s productivity?

**Lawyer:** Uh, yeah, but I don’t think we can say it rained every day for a week. I mean, was it a full week? Can we be sure about that? Is that a workweek or a seven-day week? And did it really rain every day? What are the odds that it was a full rain, every single day, for exactly one week? I don’t think we should put ourselves out on a limb like that. Instead, why don’t we say that “a period of unfavorable weather set in.”

**Communicator:** [Sigh]

Great writing is in the details. One of the greatest pieces of writing I’ve ever encountered in an employee magazine was this introduction to a profile of the company’s CEO:

“Steen Riisgaard may be the top man at Novozymes, but is he the right man for the job? Judge for yourself after reading this interview with a man who’s passionate about nature, a nerdy birdwatcher—and the first to admit that he’s too impatient, always wants to win, would like to have a piece of your soul, and worries when things are going well.”

Yowzah! You tell me what employee isn’t going to turn the page and read this profile of the CEO! Why? Because of the details! They called the top guy a nerd! They said he wants a piece of your soul!

In just two great sentences, employees learn seven interesting things about the man who leads their company. That is

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**creative communication** by steve crescenzo

**Save your soul!**

The devil may be in the details, but that’s also where you’ll find good writing.

Corporate writers tend to create content filled with vague quotes and endless corporate babble, but no real examples or anecdotes.
Once you’ve dug out the interesting facts ("Nerdy birdwatcher! Wants a piece of your soul! Worries when things are going well! Too impatient!") you have to have the guts to use them.

Great writing. E.B. White would be proud.

Of course, the writers didn’t just make up those details. They had to get them during the interview—which is where most communicators slip up. They do too many interviews via email, with no chance for follow-up questions. They are Deckheads, who write complete stories based on PowerPoint decks. Or they do the interview face-to-face, but don’t ask follow-up questions. They don’t ask for examples. They don’t ask for anecdotes. They don’t ask for clarification. And when it’s time to write, they don’t have any of the specific details, color, stories or facts that can bring a story to light.

And once you’ve dug out the interesting facts ("Nerdy birdwatcher! Wants a piece of your soul! Worries when things are going well! Too impatient!"), you have to have the guts to use them.

Why does it take guts, you might ask? Because many companies and executives are afraid of specificity. They think the devil really is in the details. The more specific you are, the more accountable you are. The more chances for errors. Better to be bland and vague, so nobody gets in trouble.

There were at least three courageous people involved with that CEO profile: the writer, who obviously had to go gather the interesting facts and then include them in the article; the CEO, who had to sign off on it, knowing that it could be risky telling people that he wants a piece of their soul; and the lawyer who had the final say.

All of them had to take a chance—and they did, and it worked.

It usually doesn’t work. Either the communicators are too scared to go after the good details, or the executive won’t go with anything other than a canned quote or corporate boilerplate, or even if the communicators and executives play ball, the lawyers shoot the whole thing down.

Here’s another example of the power of specificity. It comes from one of the great employee publications, Walgreen World. It’s a column by a high-level executive, and the theme of the piece is that it’s OK to make mistakes in business—as long as you learn from them.

In the column, the Walgreens executive talks about two serious mistakes that he has made in his career. He laughs at himself. He sounds really human. He recognizes that everyone makes mistakes, and then goes on to point out how we can learn from them. Here’s how he leads his column:

“Mistakes are an unavoidable part of the learning process. I know this from experience. Here are two I’ll never forget: When I was a store manager, I once tried to control inventory by simply cutting back on group sheet buys. Big mistake. My blunder caused massive ad outs and many extremely unhappy customers, and I had to spend the next six months scrambling to pick up merchandise from other stores.”

What a lead! Anytime an executive uses words like big mistake, blunder and scrambling in reference to himself, you know you have something special.

He then describes, in detail, another boneheaded move he made as a manager, and what he learned from that fiasco. And then he offers three specific things you can do every time you make a mistake to make sure you learn from the experience.

What a terrific concept for a column! Instead of preaching to employees about this topic or that topic, what if all executives were willing to use specific anecdotes from their own careers—even if those anecdotes make them look less than perfect? Think they might pull in a few more readers?

This executive wanted to write about bouncing back from your mistakes, so what did he do? He didn’t write some pie-in-the-sky platitudes. He wasn’t vague. He wasn’t generic. He listed two very specific mistakes that he had made in his career—and then listed three specific things you can do every time you make a mistake.

That is great, creative writing. Why does it work? Because it’s specific.

It’s our job, as writers, to fight for that kind of specificity. Fight for clarity. Find the anecdotes and examples that will drive home your points—even if they might make some people uncomfortable.

Because if you give in, then you truly are giving up a piece of your soul.
We live in a time when creativity, social networks and perspectives are more abundant than ever. It’s the age of information, and it’s waiting for you. Are you ready?

In *HyperThinking*, Philip Weiss shares a new way of thinking for the era of the Web and new technologies. He defines *hyperthinking* as “a radical philosophical discipline and practical thinking process that advocates ongoing intellectual adaptation and development to meet the changes imposed by a rapidly moving, Internet-driven age.” This approach is a practical paradigm that asks how we need to think differently.

If you’ve only been somewhat involved online or maybe resistant to the call of social media, this book offers a new approach to embrace change and a tangible system to follow to get up to speed. If you’re already a social media maven, you might find the book elementary in its system and examples. However, Weiss’s theory of hyperthinking would be a challenging concept for the most skilled individual to master.

The book’s sections take you on a journey to understand this new paradigm, starting with a detailed look at how it was created. The book then turns to the four dimensions of hyperthinking, including putting thought into action and reviewing a thorough plan, and finally takes a look at real-life practitioners who have made hyperthinking a reality. The jewel of this book is Weiss’s storytelling. I found his examples especially rewarding and full of meaningful information.

A large part of the book is dedicated to understanding the conceptual foundations of hyperthinking. The theory becomes clearer in part three, which examines the dimensions of hyperthinking:

- **Hyperlearning**, or thinking about thinking and learning to think better and develop your creative muscle.
- **Hyperlinking**, which is about fully embracing new technologies.
- **Hyperacting**, the act of harnessing mental energy and channeling it into activities.

This section is fleshed out with examples and easy-to-understand concepts. For example, a teacher is upset because she cannot use her computer effectively. Weiss suggests we take a child-like mind-set and try different things—in this case, by looking at the computer like a child exploring, the task becomes different and a shift in thinking is made.

Part four talks about practical applications in everyday life. Concepts are translated into examples that enable the reader to embrace hyperthinking and the social Web in order to understand the world differently and expand his or her knowledge and perception.

*HyperThinking* brings together a theory, concepts and real examples all in the name of embracing the new world of technology and information. Changing our way of thinking can be difficult to do. But if you are up for the challenge and want to elevate your perspective, I’d give this book a try.

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**about the book**

*HyperThinking: Creating a New Mindset for the Age of Networks* by Philip Weiss

Gower, 2012

126 pages

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**about the reviewer**

Christopher Swan is the senior manager of digital corporate communication and social media at Avery Dennison. He is also the founder of Accidental Information, a communication company that delivers news, insights and best practices.
You’ve never seen a movie where the cast and crew improvise, making decisions on the fly, going with their gut. Imagine the chaos if the producer had just a few rough ideas on paper, if the director told camera crews to just go with their gut, and if the actors were turned loose to say whatever popped into their head. It would be a nightmare and a flop.

Sadly, for many organizations, the reality of handling a crisis is just like that. No one has done any extensive preparation. Communicators and executives go with their gut in the heat of the crisis. Spokespeople stand before the media and say whatever pops into their head. The nightmare is that often the failure to properly understand crisis communications leads to the loss of millions of dollars, or worse, the loss of lives.

True, some communicators win awards for how well they go with their gut. Others nearly injure themselves trying to pat themselves on the back for how they managed the media after a crisis escalated, even when the body count exceeded 20.

But imagine how much better life would be if, on a clear, sunny day, you
Too many organizations think a vulnerability assessment happens just once. At minimum, the crisis management team should meet quarterly.

planned for your darkest day. Imagine if you never won an award for managing the media because you eliminated or mitigated the crisis before it escalated, because of decisions you made long before dark clouds began looming on the horizon.

From natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, to industrial accidents like the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, to poor behavior or even criminal acts by high-ranking executives, organizations constantly face unexpected and potentially damaging events. You cannot predict the hour or the day, but you can predict likely scenarios. Unfortunately, the failure to plan, delayed decisions and poor communication quickly compound the effects of a crisis. Yet most incidents can be mitigated with clear, sunny-day planning and preparation.

Most crisis communication plans are simply a cursory collection of rules and standard operating procedures. They result after months of strategizing, but only exist as a policy document with a collection of weak talking points and an occasional checklist that is of little or no use during an actual crisis. When the crisis comes, the communicator is still left to follow his or her gut reaction in order to communicate. You need more.

Here are five secrets to a sunny-day strategy.

1. Identify your vulnerabilities
Before ever writing a crisis communication plan, conduct a vulnerability assessment. Plan, at minimum, a half-day retreat with employees from all facets of the company, from the C-suite to the mailroom. Use a facilitator to help these employees list and discuss everything that could go wrong, from the likely to the bizarre. The resulting list may exceed 100 possibilities, from an explosion to executive misbehavior, but it will serve as the foundation for your crisis communication plan.

Too many organizations think this vulnerability assessment happens just once. At minimum, the crisis management team should meet quarterly to update the list and modify the plan as needed. I usually select only four people for this team, including the CEO, the vice president of communication, and two other positions based on the structure of the business.

Risk managers and emergency managers may attempt to thwart this effort, saying they already have a crisis list. They base their plans on high-probability catastrophic events that disrupt production and the distribution of products, affecting corporate revenues. A solid crisis communication plan helps you communicate regardless of the probability. Furthermore, risk and emergency plans do not account for smoldering events, such as executive misbehavior, which must be included in your plan.

2. Do what most fail to do
Sadly, communicators are often like sheep, collecting free samples of someone else’s poorly written documents and doing exactly what the rest of the flock has always done, without really knowing if those documents and processes are effective. Hence, the fates of multimillion-dollar companies rest on a “free downloadable template.” Those in the flock are more interested in saying they’ve completed the assigned task of writing a so-called plan than knowing whether the plan will function properly during a crisis.

Be willing to stand apart to create a superior plan. Standing apart means writing a plan that dictates and demands specific actions, performed in chronological order, with specific job assignments, so that communication happens quickly.

The plan should be written so thoroughly that...
nothing is overlooked, yet so simply that anyone—from a trained communicator, to the CEO, to the intern in the mailroom—would be able to follow the instructions. A plan that depends on a veteran communicator to execute it is flawed. If your best communicator is unavailable, someone else needs to be able to execute the plan by following its chronological road map. While some companies have a team of communicators, elsewhere such duties fall to just one or two people. Either way, your plan needs a fail-safe system so that the success of your communication isn’t dependent on only one or two people.

My approach uses a two-day writing retreat to capture all of the “gut” decisions that seasoned communicators would make and put those actions into a well-constructed, strategic plan designed to be read and followed during the intensity of a crisis. If the crisis is tragic and traumatic for the communicator—for instance, if he or she knows the victims personally—high emotions can lead to mistakes. A chronological plan that is designed to be simultaneously read and executed eliminates mistakes and maintains the communicator’s focus until the end.

Some people will suggest that a crisis communication plan cannot account for everything, because every crisis is different. True, every crisis is different, but the steps you need to take to communicate never change. From the onset, you must (1) gather the facts about the incident, (2) notify and confer with members of your crisis management team, and (3) issue your first statement about the event.

While this sounds simple, most plans fail to outline these actions in proper detail. Plans built around standard operating procedures may only say what I’ve written above, leaving the communicator to go with his or her gut to gather facts, contact decision makers and script out a statement. On a clear, sunny day, you should consider all of the questions that you would need to ask in order to begin the process of communicating during a crisis. A well-thought-out list could fill four pages of your plan.

The plan should be written so thoroughly that nothing is overlooked, yet so simply that anyone would be able to follow the instructions.

**What would you do?**

A gunman takes one employee hostage in a company truck. A second employee, attempting to be a hero, jumps on the rear bumper of the truck. Two other employees take photos of the commandeered truck speeding away. They tag hostage employee Bob and hero employee John in the photos and post them to Facebook and Twitter, asking that anyone who sees the truck call the police.

Unfortunately, the gunman said he would kill the hostage if the police were called. Unfortunately, the Facebook and Twitter posts were done before any managers were notified of the kidnapping. Unfortunately, the media saw the posting before the crisis management team knew an employee had been kidnapped. Unfortunately, the spouses of Bob and John saw the posts before human resources could call them.

Two hours later, company spokesperson Karen is in tears at the second news conference as she announces that her close friend Bob has been shot dead and that John has died after falling from the truck as it sped down the highway.

As Karen wipes away her tears after the news conference, she says, “This is only a drill. I can’t imagine how hard this would have been if it had been real. But with our crisis communication plan and more drills, I think we’ll always be ready for a real crisis.”

This is but a taste of the complications required for a crisis communications drill. The drill was so intense that executives and spokespeople were put through a full range of complicated emotions. Numerous twists and turns and details were added every 10 to 15 minutes, keeping anxiety high.

Most crises involve high anxiety and emotions. Simulating those emotions under the real-time stress of decision making and assigned tasks is the best way to prepare your entire executive team for a real crisis.

Each drill must be followed by a frank evaluation session to identify any changes that need to be made in policies and procedures. Bad behavior by any decision makers can be corrected on a clear, sunny day, so that everyone is prepared to respond and communicate properly on your darkest day.

—G.B.
Instead of writing a plan that says “Notify members of the crisis management team,” identify the team members, collect all of their contact information, and include their names and contact details in your plan, along with their alternates. Amazingly, many plans list only job titles, with no names or contact information.

When it is time to issue your first statement, your plan must dictate the acceptable speed of this first release, provide a priority list of communication methods, and contain a prewritten “first critical statement” that can be quickly modified and used.

3. Speed of communication is critical

Speed has always been important, but it is even more so in a social media world, as smartphone users can post pictures and videos to the Web before you even know you have a crisis. At a minimum, your plan should clearly state that your goal is to issue your first statement within one hour of the onset of the crisis. Faster is better. Any slower is unacceptable.

That first statement should be the same for all audiences, including the media, employees and stakeholders. Many executives mistakenly believe that their employees are special and should receive more details than members of the media. Such executives are delusional if they believe employees won’t immediately forward those additional details to the media.

Prioritizing communication tools on a clear, sunny day is critical. I practice a philosophy that “tried and true” beats “shiny and new.” The written word is cold and subject to misinterpretation, whereas the spoken word adds inflection, and in a live setting, combines inflection with the emotion that can only be conveyed by a
human presence. For that reason, if the crisis brings out the media, you should hold a live news conference within an hour of the incident. As the news conference begins, simultaneously post the same statement to your official website and send it via email to all employees. Only then should you engage social media, linking back to the official statement on the company website. A premature tweet or status update is as bad as the media hearing about your crisis via a police emergency scanner, sending reporters to your doorstep before you are ready.

Many executives fail to authorize a statement for quick release, preferring to wait until they have more facts. It’s better to issue several statements as facts become known. Feed your audience an information buffet, with the first release being an appetizer and the next release being more like the main course.

What’s more, many organizations are confused about who should deliver the first statement. My recommendation is to send out a public relations person who has been trained to speak to the media for the first news conference. Select a subject matter expert who has been through media training for a subsequent news conference. Late in the day, or at the end of the event, the CEO may speak, if he or she has been trained and if the crisis warrants a high-level executive.

4. A clear sunny-day writing retreat
The secret to great releases that need little executive scrutiny and that can be released quickly is to begin writing them after you have completed your vulnerability assessment. This is another technique you won’t find among the flock, but which you should act upon if you are willing to stand apart and do your best on behalf of your employer. I organize a writing retreat with a team of writers. Our goal is to create one prewritten news release for each item on the vulnerability list.

Using a fill-in-the-blank and multiple-choice writing technique, we write 75 to 90 percent of everything we might need to say in our second release. Each document is a great news release that needs a few blanks to be filled in with facts and a few multiple-choice bullet points selected. Each paragraph is strategically placed in the perfect order. Each paragraph is a quota answer to a reporter’s likely question. Not only are these documents a perfect script for a news conference, but when done correctly, they eliminate most questions reporters might ask. Once completed, the documents are proofed and sent for preapproval by executives on the crisis management team. Executives learn to trust the language in the releases, avoiding wordsmithing delays during the crisis. The same statements are published on the Web, sent to employees and posted via social media.

At the end of this exercise, your plan will have an addendum with 75 to 100 prewritten and preapproved releases.

5. Practice, practice, practice
The final secret to success is to hold regular crisis communication drills. You should organize at least one drill per year. The scenario must be realistic, with anxiety-creating twists and turns. (See “What Would You Do?” on page 17.) The crisis management team must make tough, fast decisions, while the crisis communication team must execute its plan rapidly. When it is time for statements to be released, go through a real-time approval process and hold a full-blown news conference with TV cameras and mock reporters asking questions.

Drills prepare your executives and crisis management team to trust your prewritten documents and to respect the need for speed in communication. They will also help identify executives who fall into decision paralysis and may be tempted to delay communications. An evaluation must follow, allowing everyone to call out bad behaviors that impeded decision making and rapid communication. The evaluation allows you to correct bad action so that proper behavior happens during a real crisis.

Ultimately, your organization’s early acknowledgment of a crisis and your rapid release of statements will keep the crisis from escalating, taking it out of the headlines quickly, and often saving lives and money.

There is no need to follow your gut and wing it on your darkest day. The vast majority of what you need during a crisis should be planned, written and tested on a clear, sunny day.

Drills prepare your executives and crisis management team to trust your communication documents and to respect the need for speed in communication.

about the author
Gerard Braud is an expert in writing crisis communication plans and media training. His writing-retreat approach to crisis communication plans allows organizations to write and complete their plans in as few as two days. He can be reached at www.BraudCommunications.com.
The key is to be able to “pick the panic”—what are the concerns of the organization and the affected constituents, where will people go for information, and what are their information needs?

A crisis is a defining moment for any organization. It is when the spotlight, increasingly the world spotlight, is focused squarely on you, your response and your leadership—around the clock. Reputations are on the line. Lives and jobs too.

Communication plays a pivotal role. Indeed, one can argue that how an organization communicates during a crisis can mean the difference between survival and failure. Appropriate and accurate communication is a must, particularly in our lightning-fast age, where information travels around the globe in minutes, if not seconds.

The good news is that there are very predictable stages of not only how a crisis unfolds and is reported, but also how we humans will behave. Knowing that there are distinct, definable stages means that we can predict with confidence what will happen and when. We can plan. We can test. We can validate our communication plans.

Without that knowledge, we may falter and make mistakes. A mishandled crisis can cause serious damage—or worse—to the organization and to its employees, consumers and other stakeholders.

**Stage 1: Breaking news**

First is the “What happened?” stage. There has been a triggering event and a crisis ensues. For example, the catastrophic explosion on the Deepwater Horizon rig in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 thrust BP into the spotlight.

In this first stage, the focus is on the incident: what happened, when and where. Speculation about the causes is rampant, and today, both facts and rumors spread via social media sources like Twitter. As Mashable reported in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court decision on the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act, aka “Obamacare,” “news travels quickly via TV, radio or online, but not as fast as it does over social media. The ‘Twittercycle’ is faster, hyper-vigilant and often more nuanced than the traditional one.”

In this breaking-news stage, we need to gauge just how big the event is in order to react, plan and respond accordingly. The key for communicators is to be able to “pick the panic”—what are the concerns of the organization and the affected constituents, where
response
will people go for information, and what are their information needs? Monitoring developments 24/7 is mandatory. Communicators need to stay one step ahead of the story.

Stage 2: The unfolding drama
At blistering speed, stage two begins. This is the “how” stage, in which the spotlight moves from the incident to the victims (which could include the environment as well as people) and the response. People are asking, “How could this happen?” as they search for someone to take the blame. This is especially true when there are lots of victims or lives are at risk, and there are far-reaching, potentially harmful consequences.

According to an article in American Communication Journal, “Crisis Storytelling: Fisher’s Narrative Paradigm and News Reporting,” people want to know what has happened to the victims. Think of the events of September 11, 2001, the devastating effects of Hurricane Katrina on the U.S. Gulf Coast, and the deadly Japanese earthquake and tsunami and subsequent nuclear plant meltdown. The media and community alike want to know about the victims. How did they deal with the tragedy? How did they display extraordinary courage? The media are expected to tell us what went wrong, who was responsible and what might happen in the future.

Such crises today also prompt policing and corrections from the cadre of citizen journalists as they report on events in real time, post pictures and voice their opinions about the organization and its response. CNN has more than one million registered iReporters, or citizen journalists, and nearly every media outlet around the globe encourages us to upload video and tweet news. With social media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, members of the public can follow what’s going on and get involved if they choose. For example, the Red Cross makes it easy for people to donate through these channels as well as traditional media outlets.

This is the make-it-or-break-it, reputation-forming stage for organizations. If an organization responds quickly, is open and honest, and acknowledges any wrongdoing, then it may escape the wrath of stage three: blame.

If an organization responds quickly, is open and honest, and acknowledges any wrongdoing, then it may escape the wrath of stage three: blame.

The choice of spokesperson during this stage is critical. If an apology is required, it must be offered by the CEO—he or she needs to step up and take responsibility.

Frontline employees also need to be thoroughly briefed and know what they can do and/or say. These employees are your brand ambassadors. They need hope too. If people believe things are going to get better, they tend to act accordingly.

The British food retailer Asda showed its savvy and understanding of the power of “ordinary” employees speaking, rather than waiting for the top dog to appear. An Asda employee captured a series of his unpleasant exploits—licking raw chickens, egg-throwing competitions, slashing staff chairs, both during and after his employment at the store—on video, posted them on YouTube and passed them to the media. There was a crisis in the making for Asda.

Asda showed exactly what to do in stage two of a crisis: Act fast, and act with the appropriate spokesperson. In the first 24 hours, Asda employees, including the manager of the store where the employee had worked, jumped into action with a YouTube response to show that such contemptuous acts were extremely rare, not part of the overall culture. Instead of widespread criticism and discussion about the vile acts, the suburban store won praise from media and customers alike for its swift response and candid comments.

This is the time for the hero stories, particularly if your employees have gone beyond the call of duty. Consider sites like Flickr and Instagram too. As they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

How your organization reacts and responds in stage two will determine how you will fare in stage three—the worst of the four stages. This is the finger-pointing stage, when everyone has an opinion about you, your product, your organization, your industry, even your country.

Stage 3: The blame game
Stage three is all about placing blame: Why did this happen? The spotlight is more like a floodlight. Once the immediate crisis is over, people
want to know who is to blame. “Told you so” syndrome takes over. Experts criticize you. Pundits cite decades-old research or reports that somehow point to dangers lurking in your organization, such as the failure to report the problem or the faulty valve, or a disgruntled employee blowing the whistle on 60 Minutes. Influential bloggers furiously voice opinions, the Twitterverse goes out of control, and people are posting comments on your Facebook page. Wikipedia features updates on the crisis, and LinkedIn forums are abuzz. Everyone has an opinion and the means to express it.

If you come out and speak in this stage for the first time, expect to be crucified. Domino’s Pizza found that out the hard way. In April 2009, two rogue employees filmed themselves doing vile things to food (not unlike what happened with Asda) and posted the video on YouTube. With the speed of social media, it’s no surprise that the negative response from consumers was swift and widespread.

Yet it took Domino’s some 48 hours to respond. Even though the team was busy behind the scenes handling the crisis, the company did not communicate what they were doing. Forty-eight hours is an eternity in this era of instantaneous communication. Indeed, the golden hour has now become the golden 15 minutes.

The key in this stage is to refrain from pointing fingers, keep your dirty laundry private, and avoid the blame game.

BP, Transocean and Halliburton could have taken this advice in May 2010, when representatives of the three companies testified before the U.S. Senate about the Deepwater Horizon explosion. The one thing that the major oil industry executives agreed on was that someone else was to blame for the accident that triggered the massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Their testimony prompted ire from the top. President Barack Obama was quick to express his dissatisfaction, saying the executives were “falling over each other to point the finger of blame at somebody else. The American people could not have been impressed with that display, and I certainly wasn’t.” A frustrated senator accused the executives of doing a “Texas two-step” to avoid liability.

Apart from avoiding the mud-slinging, other steps include highlighting major achievements and the steps you are taking to make sure that nothing like this happens again. It can also be helpful to show that you’re talking to critics, if it’s appropriate and relevant. But only join a conversation if it is strategically important or appropriate. Obviously, continuing to aggressively monitor the media is crucial, but resist the temptation to let the media and other commentators drive your strategy.

Stage 4: Resolution and fallout

The final stage deals with “lessons learned.” The spotlight has dimmed, but it can easily be restored to full glare if your organization slips up or if a similar incident happens to another player in your industry. Your crisis is perpetually in print, on Google, in Wikipedia—searchable and discoverable.

Stage four typically marks the end of the crisis in that there is some resolution. There might be a funeral, an inquest, a government enquiry or a Senate hearing. Your product goes back on the shelf, workers go back to the plant, victims return to their homes. There is also a need to mark the end of the crisis, and today that could be in the form of a tweet, a “thank you” to all who helped or a posting on your organization’s website.

A decade ago, Arnott’s, a food maker in Australia and a subsidiary of Campbell Soup Co., was the victim of an extortion attempt. The extortionist claimed that packets of Arnott’s Monte Carlo biscuits had been poisoned. Arnott’s withdrew its entire product from sale, costing the company millions. When the product finally went back on the shelf, Arnott’s launched a nationwide TV advertising campaign. It was produced in the style of a news story featuring former 60 Minutes reporter Ian Leslie, who announced, with a strong call to action: “We’re back; please support us.”

Arnott’s “resolution” story was groundbreaking in Australia and became the gold standard for such product recalls.

While there’s no telling what sort of crisis might await your organization, this four-stage approach can help you predict what resources will be needed and when, and what messages will be required. In short, understanding these four stages can help you stay focused on the tasks at hand, anticipate reactions from various stakeholders and help your organization emerge from the crisis better and stronger than before.

With the speed of social media, it’s no surprise that the negative response from consumers was swift and widespread.

about the author

Jane Jordan-Meier is principal of Jane Jordan & Associates, an international boutique training, coaching and advisory firm, and a high-stakes communication and media coach with more than two decades of experience working with executive management in both the government and private sectors. She is the author of The Four Highly Effective Stages of Crisis Management: How to Manage the Media in the Digital Age.
Reaching GLOBAL ALIGNMENT during difficult times

by Soledad Monsalve
Crisis communication management has undergone a radical transformation due to the increased globalization of industry and the evolution of information technology. Many organizations are moving from managing traditional co-located workforces and teams to managing completely distributed virtual ones. In the past two decades, organizations have changed their methods of doing business, moving from outsourcing some elements to building real global teams and departments.

In this context, organizations are more exposed to external vulnerabilities, and communication departments must take the initiative when it comes to integrating internationally diverse stakeholder groups. To protect an organization’s reputation and brand, global stakeholder alignment is essential. This includes appropriately engaging local and international stakeholders, which could range from local employees to global media organizations, in behavior that helps to achieve the organization’s goals, and relies on the organization’s ability to inspire trust among those stakeholders.

Almost every organization, large or small, has faced a crisis, from Toyota’s massive recall in 2009–2010 to LinkedIn’s password data security breach in June. The key to overcoming an organizational crisis is to have a global stakeholder alignment strategy in place prior to the event.
Here are five steps for building such a strategy, which can serve as the foundation of a crisis communication plan to address the specific needs of your organization.

Step 1: Know your stakeholders
Part of successfully overcoming a crisis involves understanding the organization’s stakeholder network and knowing that network’s interests, the strength of the organization’s relationship with them and their relationship with other stakeholders. A stakeholder network map is the key to accessing this knowledge. This graphic representation of the different connections between stakeholders is a dynamic document that should be kept up to date before a crisis. It is essential to know who your contacts are and how you can count on them.

Corporate communication teams can use the stakeholder network map to identify the influence of different stakeholders, their roles, their grouping, their location within the network and their distance from the organization. During its recall crisis, for example, Toyota had to reach every consumer who might be affected by a potentially malfunctioning vehicle. In this scenario, the corporate communication team could have used the map to understand where the main stakeholders were located and to personalize the message without jeopardizing the customer’s trust.

There are several methods to analyze these types of maps, which can be summarized in the following principle: The greater the distance between stakeholders, the more likely that messages will be distorted, and the greater the probability of confusion or misunderstanding.

Identifying risks to the organization is critical in developing a global stakeholder alignment strategy. The following seven-step process can help communicators anticipate and prepare for potential incidents.

Step 1: Hold a brainstorming session, mostly with corporate strategists, to list 20 of the most compromising situations in which the organization could find itself in the next year.

Step 2: Conduct a thorough analysis of the list with the aim of narrowing down the items to the top 10 situations most likely to happen.

Step 3: Prioritize the possible situations by creating a table with four columns—Column 1: The 10 Situations; Column 2: Likelihood of Occurrence; Column 3: Severity of Impact; and Column 4: Rankings.

Step 4: Score each of the 10 possible situations in terms of likelihood of occurrence, where zero is not at all likely and 10 is extremely likely, and include each score in the “Likelihood of Occurrence” column.

Step 5: Score each situation according to the severity of impact, where zero means the impact would be minor and 10 means the impact would be extremely severe, and include each score in the “Severity of Impact” column.

Step 6: Multiply each of the 10 scores from the “Likelihood of Occurrence” column by the results in the “Severity of Impact” column and include each score in the “Rankings” column. The higher the number in the “Rankings” column, the more important the situation is and the more risk it poses for the organization.

Step 7: After ranking the top 10 risks that the organization could face, continue the process with a simulation, which could be either basic or more sophisticated. A basic simulation process might involve a crisis committee meeting to discuss the different probabilities and scenarios, while a more sophisticated one might involve a computerized simulation in which a particular software program calculates the odds using algorithms and the information gathered in the first three steps. Either way, the aim is to learn from the different scenarios before the next step: building the global stakeholder alignment strategy.

—S.M.
The stakeholder network map is generated from a record of stakeholders and graphically displays the different connections between them. It contains detailed business information such as names, titles, companies and areas of interest. Nowadays, this process can be simplified by using customer relationship management software that can group information into categories. Some CRM software has the ability to build the network based on the organization’s list of contacts.

Step 2: Know your communication channels
Real-time information access has changed the rules of engagement for communication channels. For example, even if an organization wanted to reach journalists by providing access to its intranet or restricted Internet pages, journalists might not accept such an invitation because there are many other sources of “open” information available.

Each stakeholder on the map has a set of channels they use to consume information and to generate content. Identifying and listing these channels provide additional insight into how the global audience is connected. This inventory must take place before the crisis occurs, and should be the result of an investigation into the information consumption habits of the stakeholders (including traditional and new media).

Conducting a survey of a representative sample of your stakeholders prior to a crisis is a good way to gather this information. The aim is to understand how the channels are used and when the audience uses them. After completing this inventory, the objective is to associate this information with a specific stakeholder category. The channel inventory list will be next to each of the categories (or subcategories) of the stakeholder network map. Assigning the information to a subcategory level will allow more flexibility when designing the crisis communication plan.

Step 3: Know your risks
All organizations face risks. While it is impossible to be prepared for every type of crisis, identifying in advance the organization’s primary risks is one of the most important aspects of crisis communication planning.

This involves an exercise that consists of seven stages and aims to identify the top 10 risks most likely to happen in the next year. (See “Be Prepared: A 7-Step Process for Assessing Risk,” facing page.) For example, a financial services institution might identify a credit card information security breach as one of its major threats, while an airline might consider a technical failure one of its concerns.

Risk identification is one of the most underestimated tasks when preparing for a crisis, but it is one of the most valuable exercises because it helps to prevent avoidable crisis communication mistakes during a calamity. It prepares the organization for the unthinkable and allows it to compile the necessary materials to train its crisis committees and its management teams.

Step 4: Build your global stakeholder alignment strategy
Global stakeholder alignment should be fostered long before a crisis strikes. The foundation of the alignment strategy is deeply rooted in the first three steps listed above, and is grounded in the five principles of connectivity, growth, reciprocity, reliability and openness.

● Connectivity: Consolidate the organization’s connections by having more frequent interactions with stakeholders to strengthen the bonds with them. LinkedIn followed this principle by collaborating with its stakeholders and nourishing the relationship with them. This was essential for a smooth recovery from its password security breach. Connectivity is about engagement and interactions, and the more frequently an organization interacts with its stakeholders, the more likely those stakeholders will remain involved in the conversation.

● Growth: Proactively building the organization’s network needs to be an ongoing process. Otherwise, the organization will lose its influence over its stakeholder network. Having a stakeholder network map is essential for identifying potential target audiences and key stakeholders. It is also important to keep the map current and to analyze the strength of the organization’s network in its primary risk areas.

● Reciprocity: This principle incorporates stakeholders’ shared interests in the organization’s agenda. An organization should not expect
An organization should not expect stakeholder support if it never supports or shares their interests. If an organization has a conflict of interest with a particular stakeholder (which can happen with NGOs or governments), then it should use specific communication strategies, such as creating common causes to defend together with the other stakeholder. Reciprocity involves an organization returning as much as it can to its audience—for example, mentioning key stakeholders (such as opinion leaders) in social media posts and articles, and thanking any stakeholders who mentioned the organization in a positive context.

- **Reliability**: Reassure stakeholders by updating them on relevant news about the organization in a timely manner. The news updates should not be written to sell but to reliably communicate the organization's dealings—honest communication will allow stakeholders to feel like part of the organization. This is the same principle that is widely used in internal communications: By keeping all stakeholders up to date on the latest developments, the organization starts building trust with its audience.

- **Openness**: Remain open to dialogue with stakeholders. Sony did not follow this principle during the security breach of its PlayStation network in April 2011. The company initially withheld the extent of the breach from its audience, including details about whether customers' credit card information had been leaked. Many companies prefer to remain silent when a crisis strikes; however, this silence can be interpreted as an organization hiding something. Dialogue enables stakeholders to continue to build a relationship with the organization.

### Step 5: Deploy your resources

Speed of response is the first thing to control when dealing with a crisis. Even if your organization seems far from having a crisis, you must ensure that all resources are prepared for action. Most crisis communication plans do not work effectively because of a lack of preparation during the development of the crisis strategy.

One method that has proven valuable to crisis committees for testing the strategy is called ATARU, which comprises:

- **Assigning** roles to each of the members of the crisis committee.
- **Training** each of the members in crisis management and crisis communication, as well as in their role.
- **Assessing** team performance during a simulation and then offering some improvement points to the group.
- **Regrouping or reassigning** some roles if a member is not performing adequately during the simulation.
- **Updating** the crisis committee on a quarterly basis about the global alignment strategy and its elements (stakeholder network and channels management).

An organization’s crisis committee should undertake this review at least once a year.

### Monitor global alignment during and after a crisis

Monitoring an event while it is happening is essential for managing global alignment. The real-time measurement of global stakeholder alignment allows records to be kept on a daily or weekly basis and is the best way to know when the strategy is going sideways.

One tool used to measure the impact of the crisis communication plan on global alignment is the Strategic Alignment Index (SAI), which measures engagement, influence, adequacy of message, timeliness of response and perception. Measuring stakeholder alignment during a crisis is worth the effort since it allows actions to be regulated and modified in real time, while following up on the crisis communication plan. After the most critical part of the crisis is over, the SAI helps to measure the overall success of the communication strategy and global alignment.

In today’s communication environment, no organization is immune to public opinion, and every organization’s reputation is exposed to the real-time feed of information through social networking and other technological developments. The only protection that an organization has from these vulnerabilities is a strong relationship with its stakeholders. Global stakeholder alignment is about building and maintaining this important relationship. The five steps outlined here are the foundation for any crisis communication plan developed.
IT’S NEW YORK!

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Not too long ago, in the pre-digital age, corporate reputation was something that was considered manageable. Companies and the media used to have control over their messages. All a disgruntled employee or customer could do was tell a few friends and the drama would end there. However, in today’s age of always-on social media, that’s no longer the case. Discontented individuals can easily share their unhappiness with an international audience in a matter of seconds, and build a like-minded community in hours. As such, corporate reputation has become a priority for many companies, as the pressures and consequences caused by social media make it too serious to ignore.

The online media landscape in China

In China, there are a whopping 538 million registered Internet users, more than double the whole U.S. population. Most of these Chinese Netizens use the microblogging platform Sina Weibo. Although microblogging was only introduced to China in 2009, it has quickly developed into a major channel for the public to express opinions on a wide range of topics.

One factor driving Chinese interest in microblogging is a desire among the public to seek out more diverse news sources. Despite the government’s eye on major topics posted on Weibo, microblogging is often seen as a source of independent news and opinion, and is often used for fact-checking, particularly as the rate of discussion on the platform can outpace the news cycle. This was the case in the summer of 2011, after a high-speed train crash left at least 35 people dead, and fast-tweeting microbloggers drove discussion of the catastrophe on Weibo. Even the mainstream media had little choice but to quote the microbloggers in their coverage of the story. Ultimately, these external pressures influenced the Chinese government to open a full investigation into the accident and the Ministry of Railroads’ high-speed rail strategy. This situation would have played out considerably differently in China just a few years ago, before such platforms existed.

How important is reputation in China?

The standard line in China has traditionally been that companies shouldn’t waste their efforts building brands and corporate reputations. Rather, they should focus on making money quickly by producing high-volume, low-quality products. But a realistic
Look at today’s market confirms that this view is outdated. Due to a number of scandals affecting consumer products, particularly foodstuffs, Chinese consumers are very much concerned with brand and corporate reputation. Research conducted by Weber Shandwick, surveying 1,375 consumers and 575 senior executives worldwide (including a Chinese segment), revealed three very interesting results:

1. **A large majority** of Chinese consumers (87 percent) report that they increasingly check labels to see what company is behind the product they are buying. This suggests that a company’s reputation is extremely important to the brand’s reputation and in the buying decision.

2. **Nearly half** of Chinese consumers (47 percent) frequently or regularly discuss a specific company’s reputation with others.

3. **Far more consumers** are more confident about buying products from a company with a “most admired” standing (61 percent) than one with a positive share price forecast (23 percent).

Indeed, many Chinese are attracted to foreign brands because of their reputations for quality. In the cases of food and beverages, and pharmaceuticals, Chinese consumers are attracted to (and willing to pay a premium for) foreign brands because of their reputations for standards in hygiene, health and safety. Take, for example, milk powder products. In 2007, demand for infant formula from the local dairy manufacturer Sanlu was strong. Because it had recently entered into a joint venture with Fonterra of New Zealand, the world’s largest dairy company, consumers believed that the company’s products were safest for their children. But just one year later, Sanlu’s infant formula was found contaminated with the industrial chemical melamine, leading to multiple deaths and thousands of hospitalized children. Sanlu went out of business shortly thereafter, and Fonterra established its own independent infant formula factories in China as a way to reestablish its reputation for quality. The incident also resulted in action from the government, including senior-level resignations within the State Food and Drug Administration’s Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine; the establishment of new dairy regulations; and a call for stronger adherence to food safety policies at all levels.

There are no two ways about it: Reputation is important, and it is especially important in China today. But building, enhancing and protecting your brand in China has become even harder with the emergence of new media, the Internet and microblogging in particular. While China’s Netizens have managed to expose malfeasance and pressure major players (both public and private) into operating more transparently and more responsibly, they have also created an unwieldy juggernaut that has on occasion caused reputational crises for major corporations, based on the flimsiest of pretexts or with little due cause.

**Follow the rules**

One of the problems with microblogs is that anyone can say anything online—there are few laws regulating how information is posted, managed and verified. The fact that large organiza-
Building, enhancing and protecting your brand in China has become even harder with the emergence of new media, the Internet and microblogging in particular.

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How can companies protect their brands?

Today’s PR practitioners should focus on the positive. Following are six tips for protecting and enhancing corporate reputation online.

1. Integrate social media when pushing out key messages. Companies need to integrate their brand’s identity and add social media elements to their traditional print or broadcast messaging. Since customers are everywhere today, be sure to go where they are in order to engage efficiently and strategically. Establishing a presence on these critical platforms means that when a crisis looms, not only will you have a stage from which to defend your reputation, you’ll also have an audience to tap into for support.

2. Adapt the corporate messages into local languages and “transcreate” (a term coined by creative translation house Mother Tongue) those messages into culturally meaningful communications. Too much meaning can simply be lost in translation on social media platforms. Also, encourage diversity and localization, because your reputation should be able to cross all boundaries.

3. Engage your audience while being authentic and transparent. Suntech, a Weber Shandwick client and a leading global solar manufacturing company, has been under considerable pressure of late. The past year witnessed something of a meltdown of the solar industry, due to a massive oversupply of solar panels, which resulted in waning profitability and thinning margins. As companies started going out of business, operational excellence and financial management became priorities for the industry. Amid the turmoil, Shi Zhengrong, Ph.D., Suntech’s founder, announced that he was going to step down as CEO and act as executive chairman and chief strategy officer, in a bid to ensure the company’s survival through management restructuring. Within days, Shi published a blog article titled “The Next Chapter” that outlined the thoughts behind his actions, achievements and challenges, and how the company was ready for change. It is best to protect reputation by being as straightforward as possible. Your stakeholders will reward you for it.

4. Review all company policies, including the social media policy, to ensure that employees do not tarnish corporate reputation, intentionally or not. Draw up some guidelines for social media engagement before encouraging staff members to blog or tweet, and make sure guidelines are provided to new employees. Your organization’s reputation is too important to leave to chance in the anarchic world of social media.

5. Form a crisis communication committee, activate influencers, prepare dark sites and push out key messages. Due to the radical nature of social media, and the round-the-clock news cycle, be prepared for the worst. Have a social media crisis plan in place, and regularly run through social media crisis drills—or risk executing the plan blind, untested, under the trials and tribulations of a real crisis.

6. Implement and sustain a robust, ongoing online monitoring plan to gauge the opinions of key stakeholders. There are some very good tools for monitoring and assessing social media trends, some of which are available for free, that can help monitor what is being said about your company and its products. It is better to see what is being said about your company on a day-to-day basis to forecast any negative news than to wait for the proverbial you-know-what to hit the fan and then try to respond.

About the Authors

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THE SIMPLE FACTS

5 ways to get noticed online in the Chinese market

by Lee Green

Internet users in China have surpassed the 538 million mark. China's Netizens represent an enormous opportunity, but getting noticed is tough, and it's nigh on impossible if you don't know how to create content that your consumers and other stakeholders can find, use and engage with. It is a big challenge for any communication professional, and with the “Great Firewall of China” blocking the majority of Western social media sites, China’s online population is restricted in how they can access your content. It is, therefore, vitally important that you disseminate your messages through as wide a variety of channels as possible. And while there may be a focus on digital integrated marketing communications, don’t forget the burgeoning collection of traditional media that include more than 2,200 daily newspapers and 10,000 magazines.

The good news is that online PR and content marketing in China work very much in the same way they do in other regions. The concepts should not be new to industry veterans. There is one distinct difference though, and it’s such a big difference that it should influence every single thing you do when trying to reach your target audience. That difference is China itself, and you have to remember that not just any old content is king: Local content is king.

Creating local content that can be found easily is the cornerstone for any success you may have in China, and so a solid strategy is essential. There are numerous items that you will need to look at when creating content for Chinese audiences.

Unlike some Western companies, Walmart is thriving in China—largely because it makes use of both traditional and new media to reach its various stakeholders in a timely and effective manner. The retailer is now making inroads into China’s e-commerce segment.
The difference is China itself, and you have to remember that not just any old content is king: **Local content is king.**

However, from a purely digital perspective, there are five simple facts that stand out and that will put you in a much stronger position, with your content far more accessible to your target consumers and stakeholders.

1. **Optimize your website in Mandarin Chinese.**
   It’s amazing how many press releases have been translated into Chinese but then say something like, “For more information, please visit: myenglishwebsite.com.” If you are serious about getting noticed in China, you must have an optimized Chinese website. You could be sharing some really great content across various platforms, but if the final destination is an English-language website, you’ve already lost. The main premise of a great website is to give people what they want and to provide truly engaging and useful content. You are not doing this if you provide Chinese stakeholders with an English-only site.

   Make sure to register your site with a local ISP too. You may have already decided to develop a great Chinese website with lots of inspiring multimedia content, but if that content then takes 10 times longer to load than your visitors expect, you’re going to struggle to generate any real “stickiness.”

   The simple fact: Most Chinese only speak Mandarin, and if your website is in English, it’s not usable. It’s a massive oversight if you think an English-language website is good enough.

2. **Online search dominates, so create SEO-friendly content.**
   Baidu.com is the fifth most popular website in the world and the most visited site in China, but keep in mind that three of the world’s top five sites, as ranked by Alexa.com, are blocked in China. You may think Google, Facebook and YouTube are great marketing tools, but they mean nothing in China. In fact, Baidu is the first port of call for about 95 percent of all online searches in China.

   With more than half a billion Internet users in China, it makes sense to see what the majority of them are doing. Search remains a key tool for both consumers and journalists, so ensure that your content is SEO—search-engine optimized. Remember that Baidu dominates the search engine market and has its own unique search rules—don’t presume Google’s search rules work as well for Baidu.

   Here’s a good example: If you type “Ogilvy China” in English into Google.com, the top result is Ogilvy’s English-language site. If you type the same thing in Google.hk, the top result is Ogilvy’s Chinese site, but from there it’s all English-language content, including Ogilvy’s Twitter and SlideShare accounts. However, if you do the same search on Baidu.com, the English-language version is nowhere to be found. The first page is filled with links to Ogilvy’s Chinese site, its Sina Weibo feed, videos on Tudou.com (the Chinese version of YouTube), and a host of other Chinese content on blogs and news sites. The results are totally different across search engines, but they are 100 percent relevant to the dominant market and fulfill the needs of both Ogilvy and its target audiences. Of course, while these searches are done in English, it emphasizes the importance of ensuring that your content is searchable to the right audiences.

   The simple fact: The vast majority of searches are in Mandarin Chinese, so Chinese content is essential to any success you hope to have here.

3. **Don’t forget that traditional media remain the most influential.**
   There has certainly been a convergence of traditional and new media in recent years, but traditional media remain more important and influential in

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**China Daily and other traditional newspapers now have online versions.**
China. This doesn’t mean you need to appear in the print versions of China Daily or People’s Daily (though it helps), because many of China’s traditional media have already successfully migrated online. Newspapers and magazines are also becoming more actively involved in social media and mobile entertainment platforms, as they look for ways to expand their readership.

One key feature of China’s online news environment that differs from the West is that government regulations restrict the number of outlets allowed to produce their own news. Many sites have to aggregate content from authorized producers, and this gives an upper hand to the online versions of traditional media because they have this authority. Their online content has become a key source of content for the majority of China’s news sites, including those of the big four portals: Sina, Sohu, Tencent and NetEase. It is, therefore, important to build relationships with these kinds of media or use services that already have established relationships.

Walmart, for example, is no stranger to a good scandal in China, but unlike Best Buy, which failed to understand the local market, Walmart is still here and thriving. Only recently, Walmart announced it was moving into China’s booming e-commerce industry—one that is worth more than RMB268 billion per year. One thing that Walmart does really well is target both traditional and new media. Through the distribution of Chinese press releases and other content, Walmart reaches all its key stakeholders in an acceptable format and time frame. This allows the retailer to address the concerns of stakeholders in a timely and effective manner, while also keeping them abreast of what the company is up to.

The simple fact: Getting your content picked up by traditional media provides the opportunity for your content to be aggregated by the major portals and other news sites, so they present the best ROI.

4 Don’t underestimate the power of images and videos. Not only do journalists favor press releases that contain multimedia elements, but your content is much more likely to be shared among online communities. Such content should also be archived on the major Chinese platforms like Youku, Tudou and ImagineChina. It doesn’t matter whether you’re issuing a press release or posting a tweet on Sina Weibo; images and videos should play a key role in your content marketing strategies.

Sina Weibo, often seen as a Twitter clone by people in the West, actually offers a far richer user experience than Twitter does, and shares many elements with Facebook. Twitter is lagging behind Sina Weibo in a number of ways, one of which is the ability to embed multimedia content. The ease with which China’s social media platforms embed images and videos should not be overlooked. Such content can make an enormous difference in how stakeholders engage with your content.

Archiving on local platforms will also allow users to embed the videos into local social media platforms, be it a Weibo site or social network—something impossible with content archived on U.S. platforms.

The simple fact: Utilize images and videos to your advantage. You’re much more likely to get noticed and shared if you do.

5 Make use of Chinese social media platforms and blogs. There are a number of reasons why social media and blogs are important, many of which mirror the reasons they are so influential in the U.S. and other developed markets. If you are serious about communicating and engaging with Chinese stakeholders—be they other professionals, journalists or the general public—a sound social media presence is vital. The major blogs and social media platforms also carry a lot of weight with search engines, and such content can be easily searched. With Baidu agreeing to provide Sina Weibo tweets in its organic search results, the importance of the portal has also increased.

With the U.S. social media sites blocked, you also have to remember that anything you put on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube will be inaccessible to the vast majority of Chinese. It is possible to sidestep the “Great Firewall of China” if you have a VPN connection, but you can’t rely on this when playing to the masses. So, while you know the importance social media now play in Western markets, remember that these principles apply in China too, but your efforts will only be successful if you provide content in places

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The United Nations declared 2011 the International Year of Chemistry—a world-wide initiative focusing on achievements in chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humankind. India’s Tata Chemicals Ltd. saw a strategic advantage in using this occasion to create buzz about chemistry as a subject, and for building a platform that could bring together people from industry, academia and other associations to form a community of chemistry enthusiasts.

It also provided the company with a chance to connect with young people and spark an interest in chemistry.

To create this community of chemistry enthusiasts, Tata Chemicals launched a website (www.humantouchofchemistry.com) designed to connect the general public with the subject, and established a “Best Chemistry Teacher Award” to garner support and representation from educational institutes, chemistry associations and industry bodies. This was the first step toward bringing together relevant stakeholders, engaging with them and creating advocates who would help alleviate the negative perception associated with the chemical industry.

A key player in the Indian chemical industry, Tata Chemicals identified the following challenges:

- **Low excitement** about chemistry as a subject of study, compared with IT, finance, advertising, etc., particularly at the university level
- **A dearth** of champions/advocates for chemistry as a subject and for the chemical industry
- **Because of the above**, difficulty attracting talent to the industry
- **A need** to raise the quality of chemistry education in India

Tata Chemicals’ research and focus group interactions revealed that teachers play a significant role in inspiring young people in their career choices. Whatever field we are in, most of us owe it your stakeholders can find it.

A recent example of the power of social media was the publicity storm experienced by the China Red Cross. When an employee boasted about using funds to buy herself lavish gifts, including posting images on Sina Weibo, which has 300 million users, the Red Cross found itself in a public relations nightmare. It has since worked extremely hard to improve its official social media presence, informing users of the great work it is doing throughout China. In short, you have to be involved in the conversation so that you can respond quickly. Delaying responses, even for a day, could be catastrophic.

*The simple fact: With hundreds of millions of social media users in China, social media platforms offer exponential exposure. You need to find a way to listen, monitor and engage with your Chinese stakeholders via these platforms.*

Getting noticed online is not all that different in China than it is in the U.S. and other markets. However, China is unique, and the biggest hurdle is ensuring that you provide content for the masses. This means providing content in Mandarin Chinese. The next step is to get your content out there and in places users can find it. There are many ways to do this, including press releases, blog posts and social media. However, no matter how you choose to do it, make sure that your content is relevant, accessible and usable—and the way to achieve all three is by providing localized content. Remember, local content is king! •

**THE RIGHT CHEMISTRY**

In India, Tata Chemicals connected teachers, students and industry to promote chemistry

by Sujit M. Patil

The United Nations declared 2011 the International Year of Chemistry—a world-wide initiative focusing on achievements in chemistry and its contributions to the well-being of humankind. India’s Tata Chemicals Ltd. saw a strategic advantage in using this occasion to create buzz about chemistry as a subject, and for building a platform that could bring together people from industry, academia and other associations to form a community of chemistry enthusiasts.

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Tata Chemicals’ research and focus group interactions revealed that teachers play a significant role in inspiring young people in their career choices. Whatever field we are in, most of us owe it
in large part to our teachers. But once we have passed through the portals of education, we tend to forget the role they played. The same is true for a large community of chemistry teachers. When teacher recognition emerged as a key emotional hook that could unite a community, Tata Chemicals launched the national “Best Chemistry Teacher Award” to celebrate the efforts of exemplary individuals involved in teaching the subject.

Changing industry perceptions
The primary target audiences were the student and teaching communities associated with chemistry and their allied components. Spread across India, this segment is a mix of geographically, linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds with different age groups, levels of education, exposure to the world and mind-sets.

The campaign’s hypothesis was that supplying the next generation of stakeholders (in the student community) with accurate information could help change industry perceptions in the long run. The secondary audience was the chemical industry associations, institutes and research establishments that could bring credibility to this movement. The Tata Chemicals team identified several measures of success for the project:

- **Attain** at least 200,000 page views and 50,000 unique visitors on the promotional microsite during the promotional period of about 30 days.
- **Inspire** at least 5,000 students to voluntarily recognize their teachers on the portal.
- **Engage** at least 2,000 serious chemistry enthusiasts on the campaign Facebook page.
- **Get** participation from at least 200 academic institutes (across undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate sectors).
- **Gain** at least 50 positive video testimonials from across the target audiences.
- **Conduct** at least three chemistry popularization workshops and a chemistry quiz for 20,000 students across the six zones (each zone has about four states) in India.
- **Garner** ratings of 80 percent or higher in polls measuring satisfaction with and effectiveness of the program.

In addition, the team endeavored to create a community of 2,500 “champions” who could be future chemistry advocates; motivate and encourage the often shy and introverted community of chemistry teachers to come forward and nominate their great work in the field of chemistry (at least 300 teachers); and garner voluntary support from at least one large industry body and four eminent scientific institutes with a research focus on chemistry and its allied components.
Once the key hook to attract people to the cause was decided, the next step was to create an outreach program to communicate with the target audiences. The community-building process was based on a mix of word-of-mouth promotions; “campus connect” programs; FM radio campaigns around “Teachers’ Day,” a holiday celebrating teachers on 5 September; and social media. These channels and events gave students a chance to publicly thank teachers and acknowledge the role they played in their lives.

Besides evaluating experience and expertise, the awards process focused on innovative methods in teaching chemistry, contributions made by individuals toward scientific literacy and how teachers would explain chemistry to a 6-year-old.

The awards process focused on innovative methods in teaching chemistry, contributions made by individuals toward scientific literacy and how teachers would explain chemistry to a 6-year-old. The nomination process, selection criteria and transparency contributed to making this award significant for the recipient. The jury consisted of eminent award-winning scientists and professors from leading educational institutes.

The project was submitted to the International Year of Chemistry (IYC) committee at the United Nations and on its approval was included as an official IYC activity.

Addressing challenges
The campaign was not without challenges. These included:
• Gaining credibility and acceptance for the campaign. Getting the academic and research communities excited about this initiative was essential. The team addressed this challenge by collaborating with and involving a mix of thought leaders, chemistry evangelists, teachers associations, student communities and the chemical industry right from the start.
• Getting nominations voluntarily from chemistry teachers. Regular interactions with the key members of the Association of Chemistry Teachers (ACT) and the use of social media, student recommendations, peer recommendations and college-connect programs helped generate close to 500 entries—a record for voluntary participation by teachers in an awards program in the country. The strategic partnership with the ACT helped increase the program’s reach.
• Mitigating negative social media responses. While social media helped in communicating the message and assembling a community of chemistry enthusiasts, a small segment of the community posed a threat in terms of posting derogatory remarks about the process and some teachers (considered normal for any open competitive process). The team mitigated this with proper planning and engagement. They established social media champions from the student and teacher communities, who helped nullify the effects of undesirable remarks by voluntarily posting positive comments about the process and the need for such a platform.

Positive results
Tata Chemicals saw a huge buzz across the audiences, and the campaign results exceeded expectations:
• Per the web analytics report, during the promotional period of less than a month, the website received 227,341 page views and 60,278 unique visitors, against goals of 200,000 and 50,000, respectively.
• More than 7,000 students signed up to recognize their chemistry teachers on the portal (the goal was 5,000).
• About 3,500 serious chemistry enthusiasts participated on Facebook (the goal was 2,000).
• The campaign received entries for the chemistry teacher award from roughly 375 institutes of learning—undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate (the goal was 200).
• More than 100 positive video testimonials were submitted from across the target audiences (the goal was 50).
• The chemistry quiz attracted 27,000 students (the goal was 20,000).
• Satisfaction and effectiveness of the overall program (through polls) registered 87 percent (the goal was 80 percent).
• A community of about 3,000 (and growing) chemistry champions was formed (the goal was 2,500)—all future chemistry advocates.

Tata Chemicals plans to broaden the campaign to address an array of science disciplines beyond chemistry. A second edition of the chemistry campaign was launched on 5 September. Already a significant number of corporate and industry bodies, as well as leading educational institutes, have pledged their support for a common cause—promoting science and research. This is in line with Tata Chemicals’ credo: “Serving Society Through Science.”

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Memorex goes live with virtual campaign

A tie-in with a popular kids’ show and an online dance contest help the consumer electronics company connect with “Modern Moms”

In the 1970s, Memorex became a household name with an iconic television commercial featuring the legendary jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald and the slogan “Is it live, or is it Memorex?” But it wasn’t long before cassette tapes, the company’s signature product, and later compact discs, fell out of favor.

Memorex didn’t go away. The company started selling electronics, including iPod sound systems, but without any advertising to support the products, sales and awareness were low. Recognizing the need for a radical marketing makeover, Memorex turned to the Minneapolis, Minnesota-based agency Padilla Speer Beardsley.

To reposition its brand, Memorex sought to carve a niche in the crowded consumer electronics market by targeting mothers and young families. Studies by the Consumer Electronics Association showed that women in U.S. households with at least one child under the age of 18 spend an average of US$822 on consumer electronics products each year—that’s more than 50 percent of total household spending on consumer electronics. A scan of competing consumer electronics retailers revealed that the “Modern Mom” is an untapped demographic in this category.

Research showed that these Modern Moms tend to be between 25 and 50 years old, with at least one young child; college-educated; and middle-class. Being a mother is only part of how the Modern Mom defines herself. She has a tight-knit group of friends and actively uses Facebook to connect with her friends and family. She isn’t an electronics expert but researches electronics products online before purchasing them.

Memorex identified a secondary audience for its brand repositioning in fans of the children’s TV program Yo Gabba Gabba! According to research from the show, a high percentage of viewers fit the demographic and psychographic traits of Memorex’s Modern Mom.

The Memorex–Padilla Speer team polled 2,000 parents in the U.S. to determine the role that consumer electronics play in family life. Key findings of the “WeTime” survey revealed that:

- The most popular “together-time” activities for families are watching television or movies.
- Listening, singing and dancing to music are also popular.
- Product reviews on websites or blogs are the

The Memorex campaign’s “Dancey Dance Video Contest” on Facebook, which encouraged parents to submit videos of their children dancing to music from the Yo Gabba Gabba! TV show, helped engage Modern Moms and their families: The contest application was viewed more than 19,000 times.
most influential sources of information leading to an electronics purchase.

The team also reviewed three studies by the Consumer Electronics Association: Moms and Social Media: Influencing Technology Purchases; the 12th Annual CE Ownership and Market Potential, 2010; and Online Social Media Habits of Consumers. Key findings included the following:

- Among people who go online, moms are more likely than the general population to purchase a consumer electronic as a result of reading information online (64 percent versus 43 percent).
- Social networking sites are a top online destination for mothers—84 percent of moms online visit social networks, compared with 74 percent of all adults online. Among moms, 94 percent visit Facebook most often.
- Video-sharing sites are another top destination, visited by 65 percent of moms, compared with 56 percent of all adults online.

Goals and objectives
The team aimed to complete the following between 1 July and 16 September 2011:

1. **Raise awareness** of Memorex’s 50th anniversary and two key products, PartyCube Sound System for iPod and PurePlay Portable Speaker for iPod, among Modern Moms by generating 100 million positive, targeted impressions through earned and paid media.
2. **Directly engage** 5,000 Modern Moms and children through a video contest and Ustream event.
3. **Increase the number of people** who “like” Memorex’s Facebook page by 20 percent, emphasizing Modern Mom and her family.
4. **Increase sales** of two key products: PartyCube and PurePlay.

Solution and implementation
To position Memorex as the champion for the Modern Mom and family time, the team worked to tie the brand to the identified activi-

Sales of the Memorex PartyCube Sound System for iPod more than doubled during the course of the campaign.
The campaign culminated with a “virtual 50th birthday party” for Memorex featuring Yo Gabba Gabba! characters, which was streamed live across the U.S. on Ustream, family blogs and Facebook.

The virtual birthday party featured members of the Yo Gabba Gabba! cast, the grand-prize video contest winner and Memorex product giveaways. The team produced a 15-minute live-to-tape event featuring recurring Gabba guest Leslie Hall as host and appearances by members of the show’s cast. The event showcased the winning video, while wrapped PartyCube and PurePlay products were distributed to in-studio guests. There were also giveaways of Memorex products and Yo Gabba Gabba! Live! tour tickets to virtual guests, along with a live chat with cast members.

The team also connected with web editors at national magazines and family bloggers, working in three phases to raise awareness of the contest submission period, the contest voting phase and the virtual birthday party. Sixteen bloggers were selected to serve as birthday ambassadors and asked to post first a review of a Memorex product; next, a giveaway of a product among their readers; and finally, a post to raise awareness of the virtual birthday party.

Memorex and Yo Gabba Gabba! “party kits” were provided to allow bloggers to host and blog about their own party during the Ustream event. Each party included 16 guests, a co-branded birthday cake and music played using Memorex products.

Measurement and evaluation

Objective: Raise awareness of Memorex’s 50th anniversary and two key products, PartyCube and PurePlay, among Modern Moms by generating 100 million positive, targeted impressions through earned and paid media.

Results: Generated more than 65 million impressions on blogs and other online media, 30 million impressions via Facebook ads, and more than 3 million impressions via social media, for a total of about 98 million.

Objective: Directly engage 5,000 Modern Moms and children through the video contest and Ustream event.

Results: The Facebook page’s “Dancey Dance Video Contest” application was viewed 19,354 times. Most users were in the target demographic: mothers aged 24–44. The Ustream event was viewed from 5,250 computers.

Objective: Increase the number of people who “like” Memorex’s Facebook page by 20 percent, emphasizing Modern Mom and her family.

Results:

- Memorex’s Facebook fan page received 1,130 new “likes”—a 48 percent increase—between 1 July and 16 September 2011.
- Memorex’s Facebook fan base increased among women between the ages of 25 and 34. Women aged 25–54 constituted 54 percent of the fan base.
- Daily post views increased during targeted media coverage.
- Fan interactions dramatically increased, with both post views and feedback more than doubling. The number of monthly active users increased from 876 on 1 July to 5,301 on 16 September.

Objective: Increase sales of two key products, PartyCube and PurePlay, during mid-2011.

Results: Product sales more than doubled during the course of the campaign, as evidenced by Best Buy PartyCube sales, which increased from 208 per week in May to 448 per week in June, 579 per week in July and 369 per week in August.

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about the author

Whitney McChane is currently a senior counselor at Carmichael Lynch Spong in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She was an account supervisor for Padilla Speer Beardsley at the time of this campaign. McChane developed her quantitative and qualitative research skills while earning a master’s degree in strategic public relations from the University of Southern California.
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A photo sequence allows us to express various levels of meaning as a cumulative message. We can sequence two, three or more pictures and display them side by side or from top to bottom as a photo story, allowing viewers to discover additional substance as they move from image to image. The final image in a sequence usually sums up the message with an emotional flourish.

In this three-photo sequence, which I made earlier this year in Havana, Cuba, I tell the story of a man working on the circuitry of a small computer in a public appliance repair shop. In the first image (near right), we see him testing the equipment and explaining his approach to a customer. I photographed the customer from behind, abstracting her in the process, yet still expressing her sense of patience and concern. The computer itself holds the middle ground, the object of both the customer’s needs and the repairman’s skill. Behind him, a handmade sign lists the brands and devices he specializes in repairing. This image, which I call an “opener,” offers context for the images that follow.

In this three-photo sequence, which I made earlier this year in Havana, Cuba, I tell the story of a man working on the circuitry of a small computer in a public appliance repair shop. In the first image (near right), we see him testing the equipment and explaining his approach to a customer. I photographed the customer from behind, abstracting her in the process, yet still expressing her sense of patience and concern. The computer itself holds the middle ground, the object of both the customer’s needs and the repairman’s skill. Behind him, a handmade sign lists the brands and devices he specializes in repairing. This image, which I call an “opener,” offers context for the images that follow.

The second image (center) is a transitional one—it links the “opener” to a “closer.” This picture emphasizes the talent residing in those large hands. The repairman has virtually attached himself to the machine as he patiently tries to coax it back to life. His tools are not in use—he is using only his experience and intuition to solve the problem. My vantage point is entirely different here: The sign is no longer visible, and the angle stresses the machine as well as the hands and mind of the repairman.

I call the third image in this sequence (far right) the “closer.” After 15 minutes of intense work, the repairman successfully completes his repair and acknowledges both his accomplishment and the presence of the camera with a huge, spontaneous grin. Once again his hands express how he is feeling at this moment. In one hand, he clutches one...
of his tools. He lifts the other hand to his magnifying visor in tacit salute to both my presence and his own accomplishment. He is one of the many people in Havana who routinely bring old machines back to life. Everything from automobiles to electronic devices is recycled in Cuba. Nothing, it seems, is ever thrown away.

The key to a communicative sequence is variety—each image must make different points in different ways. In this sequence the computer remains a constant, yet the repairman’s responses, gestures and even his scale vary from image to image. In the first image, he appears much smaller, even smaller than the customer he serves. For the second image, I moved much closer in order to stress his arm and hands—his forearm here is larger than his whole body is in the first image. In the final image, his response is entirely different. He is larger than he is in the first image, yet smaller than in the second. Some elements stay the same for consistency in form: The colors in the image are constant, and so is the fact that his hands and his facial expression carry the flow of meaning from image to image.●

2. The transition: By focusing on a detail of the story, this photo links the opener to the closer.

3. The closer: The repairman’s body language signals success and a wrap-up to the photo story.

The repairman’s responses, gestures and even his scale vary from image to image.
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PR AND WIKIPEDIA: BUILDING A BETTER RELATIONSHIP

Anyone can contribute to Wikipedia. But the complexity of connecting with this online collaborative community poses challenges. The debate about whether, and to what extent, PR professionals should edit their organization’s or client’s Wikipedia entries brings up questions about transparency and conflict of interest. This issue of CW Bulletin considers the situation from a variety of viewpoints: examining ethical concerns, offering guidance on effectively engaging with the Wikipedia community, and looking at how to overcome the chasm between the PR profession and the Wikipedia community.

—Natasha Nicholson, Executive Editor, and Amanda Aiello Beck, Managing Editor

Bold Steps in Connecting PR and Wikipedia
by Neville Hobson, ABC

Whenever you look up something online, the chances are good that the results of your search will include information about your topic posted on Wikipedia. The scope and scale of Wikipedia are usually far deeper and greater than most people realize. And while Wikipedia is described as something anyone can edit, the reality of doing that is a challenge for many communicators.

Ethical Wikipedia Strategies for Brands
by David King

When legal and marketing departments establish their corporate Wikipedia strategy or policy, they often feel they have only two choices: Ignore one of the world’s most influential websites with a hands-off policy, or engage in the risky, controversial and ethically ambiguous practice of directly editing Wikipedia entries. Yet most companies can find more effective middle ground by engaging in PR or content marketing with Wikipedia’s citizen journalists—a safe and ethical way to make improvements to content that is valuable for both the organization and Wikipedia.

To Edit or Not to Edit: PR Firms and Wikipedia
by Austin Buckley

Clearly, who is allowed to edit Wikipedia pages and what changes they can make are contentious topics. Yet adjustments to entries are often necessary, with organizations and products changing quickly. Here are some best practices for Wikipedia use, as well as some general guidelines for working with the site’s editors, to ensure your clients’ entries are as accurate and up to date as possible.
MEASURING COMMUNICATION EFFORTS

Being able to quantify how communication affects the business is a critical skill.

USE THE LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS

To prove the value of communication, you need to be able to not only present the right metrics, but also capture them in language business leaders understand.

THE VALUE OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

As social media measurement continues to get more and more sophisticated, standards are emerging.

Plus A special report on the Europe/Middle East region
In August, Wired reporter Mat Honan got hacked. The hackers took over his Twitter account and, using his Apple ID, remotely wiped out files from his computer and phone—all in the span of an hour. The incident left many of us wondering: How safe is our confidential information online and in the cloud?

Even if we take precautions—such as using two-factor authentication on Gmail; having different, complex passwords for each of our accounts; not cross-linking our accounts; and updating our platforms regularly—there’s always a risk when it comes to using platforms and accounts designed, developed and maintained by others.

In Honan’s case, he admits there’s no doubt that he could have been more thorough in protecting himself and his personal information—though to some degree, the majority of Web users today are guilty of this. We’ve grown to feel safe and comfortable giving big, trusted websites our confidential information, and it then becomes easy to overlook our own cybersecurity.

What concerns me most is what we have little to no control over: other companies’ systems. Honan’s hackers gained access to his Apple ID because Apple required the last four digits of his credit card as a security measure—the very four digits that Amazon openly displays within their users’ accounts, which the hackers had, of course, accessed as well.

And although Apple and Amazon have learned from their mistake and say they are committed to tightening up their security methods, what about every other website that we entrust with our confidential information, such as our banks, our credit card providers, straight through to our online library accounts?

Although there are cybersecurity standards with which companies are supposed to comply in order to properly protect their users’ confidential information as well as their own, I think cybersecurity needs to include mandatory global standards for all companies and websites that ask for our private information, as well as ways to ensure that these standards and best practices are being met and updated regularly.

For example, credit card companies need to develop global regulations for exposing partial credit card numbers, both online within accounts and offline on purchasing receipts. Also, some form of random or regular checks should be made by organizations such as the Information Security Forum (ISF), in order to ensure that companies and organizations are meeting these global security standards. And there should be clear consequences, such as fines, for lack of compliance.

LinkedIn’s recent password-hacking incident is a perfect example. LinkedIn’s more than 175 million registered users trusted that the site was meeting current security standards, but in June, 6.5 million users’ passwords were hacked. A situation that should never have had the opportunity to happen happened, and had LinkedIn been up to date with its cybersecurity processes, it likely wouldn’t have.

Organizations like the ISF have been doing a great job helping organizations protect themselves and their users with up-to-date cybersecurity standards. Now I think it’s time to make such standards include consistent measures of displaying private information, and make them mandatory across the board.

Our online activity and purchases are only going to increase in the coming years. Yet our cybersecurity standards are not where they should be. It’s time for some improvements, and for those improvements to be assessed and standardized globally and unanimously.

We’ve grown to feel safe and comfortable giving big, trusted websites our confidential information, and it then becomes easy to overlook our own cybersecurity.

Locked up

It’s time to tighten up our global cybersecurity standards

about the author
Melissa Agnes is a social media crisis specialist and consultant. She blogs at MelissaAgnes.com, and is a co-host of The Crisis Show and the creator of The Social Media Crisis Academy, an online training course aimed at helping small to medium-sized businesses and PR professionals develop strategic social media crisis communication plans.

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