

PRSA 2007 Northeast District Conference

Title: Joint Information Center Operations & Media Center Relations: Are You Ready for Alligators, Snakes, Crawfish and Network Cameramen?
Speaker: Joe Trahan (Keynote)
Time: 9 a.m.

Opening Remarks

Mr. Trahan recounted his parents' loss of home, property and memories to Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2005. As a PR professional, are you prepared for hurricanes, tornadoes, flooding, terrorist attacks or other unforeseen incidents?

ACCC Certified?

- Anticipate: what's on the horizon? What is organization facing?
- Coordinate: we all must live together, so let's work together
- Communicate: do receivers fully understand your message?
- Cooperate: keep disagreements within the organization, don't take outside

What is a JIC (Joint Information Center)?

- Ad-hoc Federal media center
- JICs organizations are federally funded and supported
- Set-Up: command & control by JIC Director
 - provides overall guidance
 - releases information
 - sets policy to release information

Handling Crises

In a crisis situation, the greatest number of people is needed at the beginning and in the following areas:

- Administration
- Logistics
- Supply
- Funding

** Maximum Disclosure, Minimum Delay **

** Go Ugly Early**

** Accuracy is key, but message must be put out there. **

Command Information

** Do not forget your organization's internal people **

** Rumors move faster than the truth **

** Give internal people the right information. **

- Research, interview and write
- Maintain website

- Create and maintain shadow website
- Take and publish photos/videos/DVDs
- Publish daily JIC updates via newspaper/radio/TV announcements
- Develop and distribute command messages

Media Queries & Response

- Who? What? When? Where? Why?
- Respond to media queries within 24 hours
- Red-White-Blue Response System [binders]
 - Red: incoming media queries
 - White: working & coordinating responses
 - Blue: completed media responses

** Speed is important, but so is accuracy in a crisis situation. **

Marketing & Proactive

- Anticipate media needs & questions
- Appreciate that media shares information with its peers [Helen Thomas]
- Develop proactive command messages with command information
- Develop & execute operational PR plans that support organization's mission

Brief/Credential/Escort Media

- Daily update(s) and media briefing(s)
- Develop media pools, if needed
- Credential all media personnel
- Escort media to sites

Monitoring/Issues Management

- Monitor media on daily basis
- Make recommendations on all media coverage
- Prepare daily report that analyzes positive, negative and neutral media coverage
- Present daily issues management report that tracks key issues
- Present daily issues management report that recommends courses of action
- Advise the command on approaches as well as tactic.

** You are responsible for what's being said [the rumors]. **

** PR's job is to brief the speakers. **

** Pick 5 good questions. **

** Pick 5 ugly questions. **

** Pick 5 positive questions. **

JIC Equipment Needs

- Cell/satellite phones
- Computers/hand-held radios/ham radios
- Fax/Copy/Scanning Machines
- GPS devices

- Blackberries
- Video/tape recorders
- Paper

** Communicate, communicate, communicate. **

SAPP Guiding Principles

- Security
- Accuracy
- Propriety
- Policy

Security: What cannot be released? Consider privacy issues.

Accuracy: Make sure reporters get accurate information

Propriety: During crises, reporters go for death and destruction [recall Don Henley's song Dirty Laundry].

Develop a next-of-kin notification policy

Policy: Even if you disagree with policy, don't ever do it on camera

If you argue a policy on camera, you have just failed

** The top dog always barks first. **

** Remember, it's your credibility. **

Cutting through the Clutter

- Control: never lose control or you lose the argument
- Competence: subject matter experts must stay in own lane [U.S. Coast Guard]
- Concern: must be in your face, must be in your words [Rudy Giuliani on 9/11]
- Keep syringes on hand to manage hostile reporters [Russian sub incident]