RISK COMMUNICATION PRIMER:

A Guide for Communicating with Any Stakeholder on Any Issue that Impacts Your Mission

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SECTION 1: Preface

The purpose of this Risk Communication Primer is to provide planning and execution skills for communicating with any stakeholder (internal or external), on any issue that impacts your job's mission and your organization's mission. The issue can be health, safety, environmental, security, deployment, fairness, economic, social, political, personal, cultural, historical and others.

*Risk communication is communicating with **any** stakeholder, internal or external, on **any** issue that could impact your organization's mission.*

Risk Communication requires skills in three arenas:
- Genuine Emotions
- Agendas
- Perception of Risk

Each arena requires different communication skills regardless of the issue. All of you find yourselves dealing in these three arenas in your job.

Risk communication has become more important to organizations over the past years for interrelated reasons:

- More and quicker media attention on issues, including bloggers as a source of stories.
- More scientific knowledge about the environment, safety, health and sciences in general.
- Shorter attention spans to issues due to the number of public issues that surface, e.g., Mad Cow Disease, Legionnaires Disease, global warming, pandemic flu, anthrax, various food safety issues, nuclear safety, dirty bombs, biological weapons such as anthrax, etc.
- More legislation/regulations requiring information and communication about safety, health and environmental management/operations with the public. (See Section 3).

This primer should provide you with improved capability in Risk Communication.

SECTION 2: What is Risk Communication and Why it is Important

Definition of Risk Communication

Risk communication is communicating with any stakeholder, internal or external, on any issue that could impact your organization's mission. As a result, risk communication requires capabilities in the process of building, maintaining and repairing relationships with stakeholders that impact your mission. This requires significant communication skills.

- Risk communication is not public speaking.
- Risk communication is not spinning or embellishing messages.
- It requires being open, honest, genuine and sincere.
- It requires applying the required communication skills (verbal and nonverbal) in a variety of situations.
- It also requires an ongoing commitment to practice and prepare before interacting with stakeholders.

Risk Analysis, Risk Management and Risk Communication

The graphic (Fig 1) shows a triangular presentation of three fields:

- Risk Analysis
- Risk Management
- Risk Communication.

In the graphic, **Risk Analysis** represents the science, data and facts. This is the current knowledge we have about the field, such as biology, chemistry, engineering, medicine, industrial hygiene, etc. Since science is

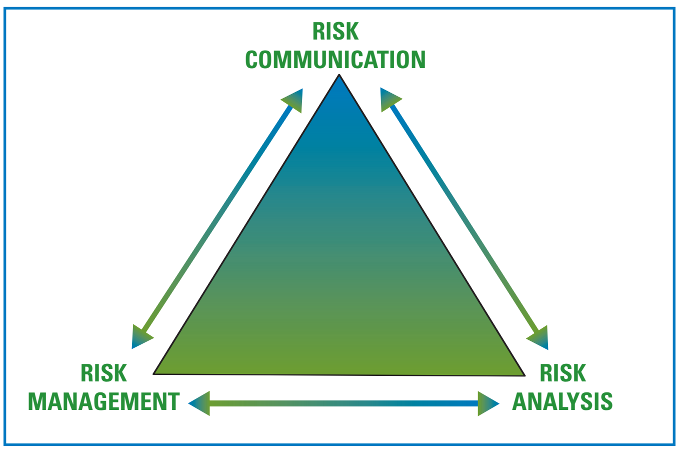

Fig 1

always progressing, changing and improving, the Risk Analysis corner is the science as we know it today.

Risk Management is the operative piece. Once we have the risk analysis information, what do we do with it? For example: How do we design? How do we operate? How do we conduct emergency planning and preparedness? How do we monitor? How do we train? How do we make cost/benefits decisions?

Risk Communication is the discussion among stakeholders about the Risk Analysis and the Risk Management information. The Risk Communication corner has become more important and more extensive in the past several decades.

In an ideal setting, the science of Risk Analysis would be applied to Risk Management decisions and discussed with affected stakeholders (Risk Communication). Everyone would then agree on the Risk Management decision. Of
course, it doesn't always operate this way. Here are some exceptions:

- Some stakeholders have agendas regarding the risk management decision regardless of the risk analysis facts. Some agendas don't even relate to the risk analysis.
- Other stakeholders may perceive the risk as far greater or less risky because of poor risk communication.
- Some stakeholders may be so upset (angry, fearful, etc.), they are not going to listen to a rational discussion on risk analysis or risk management.
- Finally, there is the media covering stories, particularly controversial stories. How your organization handles those media interviews will impact many stakeholders' views of your organization's risk management decisions.

In all these instances noted above, risk communication skills are critical for the ultimate objective of creating good risk management decisions for your organization. **Risk communication is critical to the successful operation of your organization.**

Why Risk Communication?

Risk communication, if done well, provides:

- Improved ability of the organization to focus on its mission.
- Getting ahead of issues before others develop your story for you.
- Better relationships with stakeholders, both straddlers and supporters.
- Better risk management decisions, such as design, operation, cost, etc.
- Improved court of public opinion judgments.
- Favorable outcomes from litigation.

Risk Communication Planning and Stakeholder Identification

The two key requirements of effective risk communication issues planning are:

a. *Identifying and prioritizing stakeholders* who impact your mission, favorably (supporters), in the middle (straddlers) or unfavorably (spenetics). (See Section 4A for further details on the three types of stakeholders.)
b. If either of these requirements is missing, the plan will be less effective. (See Sections 5, 6, 7 and 8 for communicator skills training capability and Section 10 for communication issues planning.)

Your straddler and supportive stakeholders frequently have good ideas to help you regarding your communication mission, goals, messages and action plans. Many ideas are "out there." "Out there" also includes internal stakeholders. Finally, how you respond to stakeholders who actively oppose you (splenetics), influences how you are viewed by the straddlers.

Identifying and prioritizing stakeholders can be done *formally* – various types of surveys or *informally* – one-on-one conversations, discussions before or after a meeting or over a cup of coffee. The informal approach frequently works and is cost effective. Many successful outreach programs use informal approaches to identify, analyze and prioritize stakeholders.

Three Arenas of Risk Communication

Risk communication operates in three related arenas:

1. **Emotions** (fear, anger, irritation, frustration, concern, worry, etc.)
2. **Agendas** (personal, political, economic, social, cultural, historical)
3. **Perception of Risk**.

These three communication arenas must be recognized in the planning and challenging dialogues that take place in any risk communication issue. Each of these requires unique skill sets.

1. Emotions Arena

In emotional situations (take anger), facts are secondary. You and your communicators need the ability to:

First – Empathize, then
Second – Ask open-ended questions, then
Third – Discuss facts.

When a stakeholder is angry, you and your communicators need "big eyes and big ears" to see if the stakeholder is calming down enough to hear and respond to factual discussions. In other words, we frequently ask factual questions before the stakeholder is ready or capable of listening.

The Three Arenas of Risk Communication are:
- *Emotions*
- *Agendas*
- *Perception of Risk*

Another dimension is how you or your fellow communicators respond to anger when it occurs in a large crowd. Is the anger isolated to a few or the majority? If it's just a few, you need to isolate the disruption quickly. If it's the majority, don't react unless they calm down – just sit back and enjoy the show. If you get angry and walk out, they win. Also, if the media is present, it makes for an interesting media story. (See Section 9 – Planning and Conducting Meetings.)

2. Agenda Arena

Recognize the situation and address stakeholders' agendas. This requires getting to the point quickly.
- "You/your organization can't do something because…"
- "You/your organization can and will do that…"
- "You/your organization will have to look into it, and the next step is…" (provide a *when* in future action). Your message will either be a) a polite no, or b) a yes, or c) a willingness to look at consensus options, common ground options, etc.

3. Perception of Risk Arena

You need the skills to explain science, data and facts to stakeholders with less knowledge than yourself. The key skill required is *avoid jargon traps* (see Section 5D). Test if they understand you and want you to continue discussing facts. The way you don't test their understanding is by asking, "Do you understand me?" Instead use, "Am I explaining this clearly?"

Other Communication Skills

Risk communication communicators need to:

a. Respond to any difficult question or statement in any setting on any issue by applying risk communication tools, such as generic categories of questions and statements, and structured guidelines for responding to difficult questions and statements. (See Section 5A.)

b. Have excellent nonverbal skills of both self awareness and observation. Nonverbal skills are very critical in dealing with emotions. (See Section 5B.)

c. Know how to use techniques, such as risk comparisons or numbers and analogies, particularly in the arena of risk perception. (See Section 5C.)

d. Avoid numerous traps including not taking things personally. Remove your "personal stuff" from the setting and become a communicator. (See Section 5D.)

e. Develop messages for different stakeholders. (See Section 6.)

f. Have personnel skilled in the Media Communication Process. (See Section 7).

g. Be prepared for Cross Cultural Communications. (See Section 8).

h. Know how to plan, prepare and conduct meetings, both internal and public. (See Section 9.)

In summary, Risk Communication is a unique field of communication. If done right, it will enhance your organization's ability to manage challenging communication issues that impact its mission.

SECTION 3: Risk Communication History

The field of risk communication is relatively new compared to its two related fields of risk analysis and risk management, which has been around for many centuries. Building the Egyptian pyramids probably required some risk assessment and risk management, e.g., the availability of labor to meet a certain schedule. Prior to the 1970's, most risk communication was focused on messages from those with risk analysis knowledge to those without that knowledge. That is, explaining risk to those who had concerns or interests in that subject or issue.

Risk communication primarily evolved from the health/safety/environmental concerns of the 1970's. Some of the milestones in the United States were Agent Orange, Love Canal and Three Mile Island. Risk communication has evolved and gained greater interest and attention among agencies, policymakers, the media and the public. In 1986, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established its guidelines for carcinogen risk assessment, the first federal agency to do so.

Many risk communication principles are based on research. That research is based on surveys that determine what influences perception of risk. Examples include positive impact of empathy on building trust and reducing concern, worry or fear; the impact of negative words and phrases versus positive words and phrases (negatives dominate the positives). Another example is the importance of getting your messages out before others tell your story for you.

Policy, Laws and Regulations Related to Risk Communication

A number of laws and regulations in the United States mandate risk communication as part of the risk assessment and risk management process. Those communicating risk need to be aware of the laws affecting risk communication efforts and what these laws entail.

Below are highlights of some of the major federal laws regarding risk communication:

- **CERCLA (or Superfund) –** Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act requires specific procedures be implemented to assess the release of hazardous substances at inactive waste sites. Those procedures involve the inclusion of "community relations" in the evaluation process.

- **EPCRA (Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act) –** A free-standing law that requires the public be provided with information about hazardous chemicals in the community and establishes emergency planning and notification procedures to protect the public from a release of those chemicals.

- **EO12898 (Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice in Minority Populations) –** Requires government agencies and departments consider any potentially human health or environmental risks to minority or low-income populations. It also requires agencies to provide information to those in the audience with limited skills in English, and the information be concise, understandable, and readily accessible to the public.

- **EO13045 (Executive Order 13045, Reduce Environmental Health and Safety Risks to Children) –** Requires federal agencies and departments consider the potentially disproportionate health and safety impacts to children from an organization's activities, policies and programs. Although this Order does not mandate risk communication per se, it does require agencies considering enacting legislation submit information specifically related to children.

- **NRDA (Natural Resource Damage Assessment) –** A natural resource damage assessment is the process of assessing environmental damage caused by releases of hazardous substances. Risk communication, while not mandated specifically, can be extremely useful in developing the assessment plan and educating the public on the potential risks and damages to the resource.

- **NEPA (National Environment Policy Act) –** Mandates environmental impact statements and other environmental assessments.

- **OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Act) –** Passed to ensure "no employee will suffer material impairment of health or functional capacity," as a result of their work. An example is the requirement of employers to explain chemical and physical risks in the work environment, often presented in the form of Material Safety Data Sheets.

- **RCRA (Resource Conservation and Recovery Act) –** Discusses how the public can take non-compliant organizations to court if the organization is negligent regarding the transportation, storage, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste.

There are many other regulations, including state and local, that apply to your risk communication plans. Check with your local organizations' functions that should have the knowledge, e.g., legal, government affairs, regulatory affairs, etc.

SECTION 4:
Principles of Risk Communication

Principal 4A. Identify stakeholders that impact your mission: favorably (supporters), neutrally (straddlers) or unfavorably (splenetics).

Differentiating stakeholders into three groupings helps you recognize different communication missions.

- **Supporters**: The primary mission is to maintain the relationship. Keep them informed and keep up the two-way dialogue. Ask them for advice, ideas, other stakeholders to contact, etc.
- **Straddlers**: This may be your most important stakeholder group. Your goal is to move them towards a more supportive position on the bottom axis.
- **Splenetics**: Recognize they will NOT be supportive. Your strategy is that anything you do with splenetics (provide information, listen to them, invite them to your meetings), you do to influence the straddlers. Splenetics cannot be influenced to support you, so you are wasting your time trying to accomplish that. Put your focus on the straddlers.

In Fig. 2, the *splenetics* are at the left end of the curve and immoveable. They oppose you and will not want to achieve common ground. There are not a large number of individuals or groups at that side of the curve. Many individuals or groups may lean to the left side of that curve, but are open to common ground and/or suggestions. These are *straddlers*.

Showing good faith with splenetics influences straddlers. Good faith means you are demonstrating that you are open to discussion and meetings. It does not mean giving splenetics what they want. By the way, juries and judges are usually in the straddler category and will look at good faith approaches by either side.

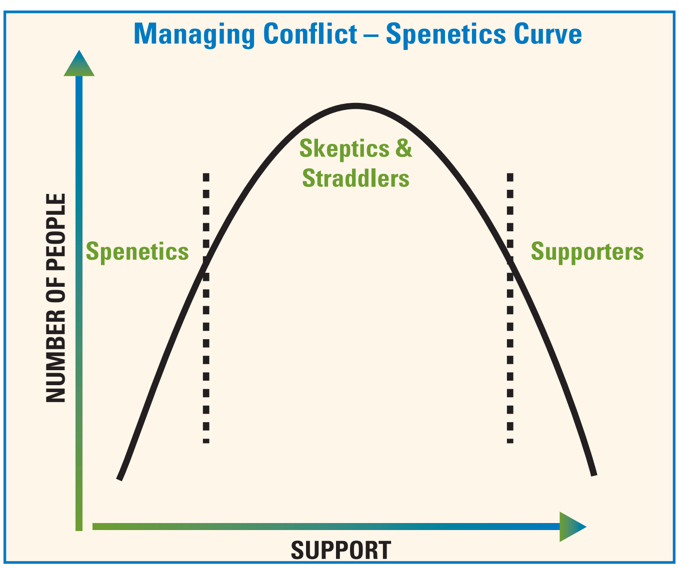

Fig 2

Principle 4B. Determine which arena influences your stakeholders.

1) **Emotions** – anger, disgust, irritation, fear,
2) **Agendas** – personal, political, economic, social, historical or cultural
3) **Perception of Risk** – Perceives a situation is more or less risky than it is. (See Section 2, Three Arenas of Risk Communication.)

Principle 4C. Utilize third party supporters that can informally or formally help you.

A third party supporter is a stakeholder who is trusted and seen as knowledgeable by your straddler stakeholders. They can help you in many different ways, from an official stance of support for you, informal conversations of support with straddler stakeholders, providing you with intelligence on activities or suggestions on approaches, etc.

For internal communication, third party supporters are frequently lower in the hierarchical chain of the organization, such as staff assistants to the command or Sergeant Majors. It would be someone who is respected and has extensive experience in the organization – knows how to get things done. Another third party supporter example is someone that works in your organization, and also lives in a community where you are dealing with risk communication issues.

Third party supporters are frequently missed because we don't consciously think of that aspect of communications issues planning. By the way, if you have a third party supporter, they can frequently lead you to other third party supporters.

Principle 4D. Get in front of issues.

If it's a crisis issue:
1) Tell people what you do know,
2) Tell them what you don't know and
3) Update them as you learn more.

Getting in front of issues is critical today because there are many organizations, including the media, talking/reporting about your issue. The longer your organization takes to get your messages out, the harder it is to overcome those stories and messages if you disagree with them. It's usually advisable to not wait to get all your facts together. Instead, say what you do know and that you'll be back with an update. The longer you delay "getting out" your story/facts, the more the perception of hiding and covering up grows. This can even hurt you months or years later in a courtroom.

Principle 4E. Ensure your communicators are properly trained. (See Sections 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.)

Principle 4F. Learn the media communication process and build professional relationships with the media. (See Section 7.)

Principle 4G. Have a flexible communication planning and process.

The action steps in this process, such as message development and meeting planning, should support your mission. (See section 10.)

5A. Two Tools for Responding to Difficult Questions and Statements

Train your communicators in the application of two risk communication tools: *Generic Categories Guideline and 4-Step Guideline for Responding to Any Challenging Questions or Statements.* These tools will be helpful in preparing you and your communicators for responding to any difficult questions and statements in any situation.

Generic Categories Tool
The first tool is Generic Categories. Many people prepare for challenging meetings (internal or external), by developing a list of potential difficult questions with possible answers – a Q/A list. This list, regardless of the issues, can be grouped into generic categories. Each category has its own unique **generic nature of response,** as well as traps to avoid. This can be an effective tool to supplement other preparations for difficult/challenging questions and statements.

Generic Categories

1. Ventilation – A Highly Negative Emotional State, such as anger, irritation, disgust, concern, worry
2. What's the Question or Statement?
3. Rude But Briefly Acceptable
4. Negative Allegations that are Not True
5. Negative Allegations that are True
6. Guarantee/100% Assurance/No Risk Acceptable
7. Fairness Questions
8. The Setup Question or Statement
9. Personal Interest That's Not Relevant (in group discussions)
10. Policy
11. Factual Questions – Who? What? When? Where?
12. Fear

The chart on the next page outlines information about each category. The most important column in the chart is **Generic Nature of Response.** Do not try to memorize this chart. These are guideline tools or suggestions. Pick the parts that are most useful to your specific job challenge.

4-Step Guideline Tool
The second tool is a 4-Step Guideline. NOTE: This is a flexible guideline, not a linear model to be followed rigorously.

- Step 1: Empathy
- Step 2: Conclusion
- Step 3: Facts
- Step 4: Future Action

Step 1 – Empathy
Sometimes it is appropriate to indicate to your stakeholders you have some idea of what they are saying and/or some sense of their situation. ***Empathy is not sympathy, and empathy is not agreement.*** Empathy is not "I know how you feel" because *you don't know how they feel.*

Empathy is not sympathy and empathy is not agreement.

Empathy is your ability to figure out the following:

- What must their situation be like for them?
- "Remove yourself" and think about them.
- Removing yourself means not bringing in your personal feelings.
- Empathy cannot be artificial or fake. It must be genuine.
- You cannot pretend to be empathic to stakeholders' situations because they can tell if you are sincere by your nonverbal communication.

Empathetic statements are most helpful when dealing with anger, fear, crises, distrust and significant concerns. Empathetic statements, if used, should usually be stated before Step 2: Conclusion.

Personal connections can be made in an empathetic statement only if the connection is 100% relevant. Effective empathetic statements would be: "I live in your neighborhood, too," "My family also drinks that water," "I've taken the vaccine," "My child also attends that school," or "I went out there and saw that." Ineffective empathetic statements would be: "I work next to your community", "I would drink that water if I lived here," or "I would take that vaccine."

CAT#	CATEGORY TYPE	EXAMPLES	MAJOR TRAPS	GENERIC NATURE OF RESPONSE
1	Ventilation – A Highly Negative Emotional State/Anger, Irritation, Disgust	★ *You killed my friend!* ★ *I have cancer because of you!* ★ *You don't care!*	★ Responding too early with factual information ★ Taking their comments personally ★ Inadequate nonverbal observation skills to detect if they calming down.	★ First, stay with empathy for awhile ★ Second, if they've calmed down somewhat based on your nonverbal observation, use open ended questions ★ Third, move to facts if they appear to be ready to discuss facts.
2	What's the question or statement?	★ *Babble, babble, babble.* ★ You can't figure out what their point or question is.	★ Assuming you know the question or statement and answering it. *about…?*	★ A softball pushback statement such as, *I want to be sure and answer your question so can you tell me more*
3	Rude But Briefly Acceptable	★ *You're an idiot!* ★ *Are you a REAL doctor?* ★ *Where'd you get your birth certificate?"* ★ *You're the agent of Satan!*	★ Taking it personally ★ Not planning ahead of time on what is acceptable and what is not acceptable.	★ Acknowledge they are upset. *Clearly you are upset. What can I do to help you?* ★ How long you allow this will depend on several factors; size group, percent of people in a crowd being rude. NOTE: this category mostly applies to public settings.
4	Negative Allegation That is Not True	★ *Why are you lying about…?* ★ *You're hiding and covering up.*	★ Pushing back and reinforcing the negative allegation, e.g., *We didn't lie.* or *Why do you think we're lying?* ★ *We didn't cover up anything!*	★ Start with emphasizing the positive reversal, e.g., the opposite of lying is telling the truth, the opposite of covering up is being open/ disclosing, etc. *Actually, we told the truth about that.*
5	Negative Allegation That is True	★ *Why did you lie about…?* ★ *You covered up.* ★ Not getting approval for your response ahead of time from Command, Legal, Public Affairs and others.	★ Defensiveness or denial when in fact the allegation is true corrective action.	★ Acknowledge the truth ★ Emphasize the commitment to ★ *We could have done a better job.*
6	Guarantee/100% Assurance No Risk Acceptable	★ *Promise me this will never happen again.* ★ *Can you guarantee me that…?* ★ *Why can't you go to zero?* ★ *Isn't it better to be safe than sorry?*	★ Initially, saying yes, no or maybe ★ Saying initially, *There are no guarantees.* or *We can't guarantee you that.*	★ Emphasize your commitment and what you are doing ★ *What I can guarantee…* ★ *We're moving towards zero.* ★ *We are making progress on…* ★ *We learned a lot from that and this is what we changed."*
7	Fairness Questions	★ *Do you think it's fair that I have to drink this water?* ★ *I don't think it's right that I have to do 'X' because…*	★ Evasive or defensive Starting with Cost/Benefit discussions. ★ Not always being aware of common ground opportunities.	★ Be open about your plans, even if the news is bad for them. ★ Be willing to pursue their point if there may be common ground.
8	The Setup Question or Statement	★ *Where do you live?* ★ *Have you taken the vaccine?* ★ *How would you like it if you had to work in this building/ old housing?*	★ Trying to avoid the setup point. ★ Not recognizing that their setup is not their underlying issue. It is just a way of them saying, *You aren't in my situation.*	★ Provide the info they request in the set up and let them go to their underlying issue, e.g., *I live 'X'* or, *You're right, I haven't been in that situation.* or *I don't work in that building.*
9	Personal Interest That's Not Relevant (in Group Discussions)	★ A question or statement about issue "X" when the discussion/ meeting is about issue "Y".	★ Getting into the non relevant discussion/issue. ★ Abruptly/rudely changing the subject.	★ Bridge back to relevant subject followed by possibly expressing a willingness to discuss another time or send to another source. ★ *I'd be glad to discuss that with you another time, but tonight we're here to …*
10	Policy	★ *I don't want to…* ★ *I think I deserve…*	★ Talking too much about their situation and possibly misleading them in terms of policy options. ★ Going into details when they may just want a yes or a no.	★ Stick with a clear statement of the policy and repeat if necessary.
11	Factual Questions – What? Who? When? Where?	★ *When is the next meeting?* ★ *What are the next steps?* ★ *When will you find out the results of the testing?*	★ Jargon.	★ Provide a simple/direct response. ★ Respond in language understandable to the stakeholder. ★ Know when to stop talking – nonverbal observation skills.
12	Fear	★ *I'm afraid of…* ★ *It's really going to get bad.* ★ *I'm not feeling good about this because…*	★ Not being truthful about what is not known. ★ Trying to avoid fear.	★ Tell them what you do know. ★ Be open about what you don't know. ★ Tell them when you'll update them.

Major traps in empathetic statements are:
- Using personal connections that are not relevant to the listener
- Giving statements that are not genuine – both in the words (body language) and voice tone.

Step 2 – Conclusion

The conclusion is usually the most difficult step in the 4-Step Response Guideline because in normal verbal communication, the story is set up with a conclusion at the end, "You won't believe what happened to me today! I was driving to work with the radio on…" The conclusion must be short, simple and *precede* the facts supporting the conclusion and should address the underlying point of the question or statement. Major traps in the conclusion step are:

The conclusion is usually the most difficult step in the 4-Step Response Guideline.

- The conclusion statement doesn't address the underlying point or question made by the stakeholder.
- The conclusion statement is too long.

Good Conclusion Statements
- "The water is safe to drink."
- "The vaccine is safe and effective."
- "I don't know, but I'll find out."
- "We've been sharing all the information with you."
- "We are doing a lot."
- "We don't plan further clean up."
- "We could have done better back then."
- "You have to take the test."
- "The food is safe to eat."
- "The policy states that..."
- "We can not provide that to you."
- "We can provide that to you."
- "I have bad news to deliver."
- "You are okay."
- "You have to wear the respirator."
- "You do not have cancer."
- "You do have cancer."
- "One thing that has to happen first is…"
- "The clean up is complete."
- "We don't plan to spend any more money."

Also, if you are concerned they are not listening to your conclusion, you can use opening phrases such as:
- "Our conclusion is…"
- "The answer to your question is…"
- "What we learned was…"
- "The good news is…"
- "The unfortunate news is…"
- "I'm sorry to say…"

- Facts are included in the conclusion, e.g., "The water is safe to drink because 'X, Y, Z'." Instead say "The water is safe to drink," then a short pause to see if you were heard. Then, "The reason I say this is (facts)." The facts are delivered separately in Step 3. First make sure they heard the conclusion.

You can use transition statements between your conclusion and facts:
- "I say that because…"
- "Why, because we have developed…"
- "The reason for that is…"

Step 3 – Facts

Facts support your conclusion. There is no right number of facts needed to support your conclusion. In some instances, you may only have one fact. Other times, you may have several facts, and your stakeholders are interested in all of them. In those instances, use *all* your facts. It is crucial to use your nonverbal skills here. As you are speaking, determine whether your stakeholders are listening to you. If not, stop talking about your facts and find out why they aren't listening, "Am I being clear?"

Major traps in the fact step are:
- Over use of negative words and phrases unless your purpose is to change behavior. (See Section 5C on Negatives.)
- Using what would be considered jargon for the stakeholders.
- Not observing if the stakeholders are listening.

Step 4 – Future Action

You may not always have or need a future action in your verbal response. There are many instances where you close/complete the response without a future action.

Good Future Action Statements
- "I don't know, but I'll call you tomorrow."
- "I don't know, but I'll let you know at the meeting next Tuesday."
- "I'll be happy to talk to you more after the meeting."
- "There's more information about this on our website/brochure/fact sheet."
- "The next review will be held at 'X' on 'Y' day."
- "We won't know for at least six months, but I'll be glad to call/email once a month on our latest outlook."

Major traps in the future action step are:
- Not mention a "when" or "when" you might have a "when."

However, it is important to have a future action when the stakeholders are concerned, fearful, distrustful, worried or confused.

Future action statements should have a "when", a timing factor. If you don't have a "when," then provide them a "when" you'll have a "when": "I'll call you next Friday. I may have that information then." Whatever your future action comment is, it should let the stakeholders know they will continue to be involved, unless, their point/issue has been resolved.

Caveats to the 4-Step Guideline (See chart below.)

- This is a guideline, not a model.
- You may not have conclusion/facts, just a future action. If so, the future action is also your conclusion: "I don't know. I'll call you tomorrow with more information."
- You can use transition statements between steps.
- None of this is effective without good nonverbal skills: both self awareness and observation skills. (See Section 5B.)

Integrating Generic Categories and the 4-Step Guideline

The integration of the Generic Categories Guideline with the 4-Step Guideline is shown below. This is not a table to be memorized. Pick the areas most applicable to your job challenges and start using a form of the categories and relevant steps in the Guideline.

5B. Train Your Communicators in Nonverbal Communication Skills: Observation and Self Awareness

Nonverbal skills are critical in the risk communication arena of **emotions**. These nonverbal skills are also im-

CAT#	CATEGORY TYPE	RELEVANT STEPS IN 4-STEP GUIDELINE	COMMENTS
1	Ventilation – A Highly Emotional State/Anger	Step 1: Empathy	Open ended questions after the empathy statement.
2	What's the question or statement?	Step 1: Empathy	★ *Can you tell me more?* ★ *I want to answer your question.*
3	Rude But Briefly Acceptable	Step 1: Empathy	
4	Negative Allegations That are Not true	Step 2: Conclusion Step 3: Facts Step 4: Future Action	★ *We've been telling the truth. What we did was...*
5	Negative Allegations That are True	Step 1: Empathy Step 2: Conclusion Step 4: Future Action	★ *You're right.* ★ *We could have done a better job.*
6	★ Guarantee/100% Assurance ★ No Risk Acceptable	Step 1: Empathy – maybe Step 2: Conclusion Step 3: Facts Step 4: Future Action	★ *We're doing a lot about that.* ★ *What we're doing is…* ★ *I'll update you on…*
7	Fairness Questions	Step 1: Empathy Step 2: Conclusion Step 3: Facts Step 4: Future Action	★ *Your situation is different.* ★ *That's true, but we can make a few changes.*
8	The Setup Question or Statement	Step 1: Empathy and/or Step 2: Conclusion	★ *I don't live there.* ★ *That must be difficult.*
9	Personal Interest That's Not Relevant (In Group Discussions)	Step 1: Empathy Step 2: Conclusion Step 4: Future Action	★ *That's interesting. However, tonight, we agreed to talk about…* ★ *I could talk to you later.*
10	Policy	Step 2: Conclusion Step 3: Facts	★ *The policy is…* ★ *If you like, I can provide you with the details of the policy."*
11	Factual Questions – What? Who? When? Where?	Step 3: Facts	
12	Fear	Step 1: Empathy Step 2: Conclusion Step 3: Facts Step 4: Future Action	★ *We're not out of the woods yet, but here is what we know.* ★ *We still need to learn more and should know that in an hour or…*

portant, but to a lesser degree, in the other two risk communication arenas of **agendas** and **perception of risk.**

What is Nonverbal Communication?*

Nonverbal communication is how we communicate our emotions, both positive and negative. Some emotional signals are universal. Babies have the same facial responses if they are happy, scared or sad.

For example:

- The lifting eyebrows in *surprise* allows the taking in of a larger visual sweep and permits more light to strike the retina. This offers more information about the unexpected event, making it easier to figure out exactly what is going on and concoct the best plan for action.
- Around the world, an expression of *disgust* looks the same, and sends the message: something is offensive in taste or smell. The facial expression of disgust is the upper lip curled to the side as the nose wrinkles slightly and closes the nostrils against a noxious odor or causes you to spit out a poisonous food.
- With *anger,* blood flows to the hands (making it easier to grasp a weapon or strike a foe), heart rate increases, and a rush of hormones (like adrenaline) generates a pulse of energy strong enough for a vigorous action.
- With *fear,* blood goes to the larger skeletal muscles, such as the legs (making it easier to flee). The face blanches as blood is shunted away from it (creating the feeling that the blood "runs cold"). At the same time, the body freezes, if only for a moment, allowing time to gauge whether hiding might be a better reaction. Circuits in the brain's emotional centers trigger a flood of hormones puting the body on general alert, making it edgy and ready for action. Attention fixates on the threat at hand, and evaluates the best response.

* *Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Coleman.*

There are two general areas of nonverbal skills to tune up: a) self awareness and b) observation.

We communicate our emotions constantly. Even "stoics" can be read by others. Nonverbal communication is more important than words in tense and stressful situations, the emotions arena of risk communication.

In these situations you are judged more by *how* you communicate than *what* you communicate. For example, juries make their decisions based on both facts (the *what*) and their judgment (the *how*) of the character of witnesses. In complex trials with lots of competing facts and witnesses, the jury is strongly influenced by their nonverbal observations of the witnesses.

Detectives, law enforcement personnel, negotiators, professional poker players must have excellent nonverbal skills to be effective in their jobs. Likewise, when you are in risk communication situations, you need these same nonverbal skills. You and your fellow risk communicators are judged by stakeholders about your *how* more than your *what*. So, you must tune up your nonverbal skills.

Two Areas of Nonverbal Communication

Two general areas of nonverbal skills to tune up are *self awareness* and *observation*. Increasing your self awareness skills does not mean you should change who you are. For example, communicators shouldn't be taught to lean at a certain degree while standing or sitting, position their hands/arms a certain way or maintain a certain percent of eye contact, etc. These guidelines are helpful suggestions, not rigid rules. Why? Because if you focus on rules of posture, hand/arm position, eye contact, etc., you won't be focusing on the right things: your observation skills and other risk communication skills you have learned and practiced. Also, there are too many nonverbal cultural differences just in the United States, let alone the world, to have a template of posture, hands, space, voice, etc. rules that apply universally. If you are ready cognitively and emotionally, your nonverbals will be okay.

Nonverbal Self Awareness Skills

The key aspect of nonverbal self awareness communication is what you do with your body (including space) and voice when you feel emotions, such as anger, irritation, boredom, disgust, nervousness, etc. This awareness allows you to quickly determine what you must try to get out of this emotional state, or you will not be an effective communicator. Use this awareness as a trigger to say to yourself, "I need to stop getting angry/nervous/irritated. I'm doing the best I can. Calm down." (There is an old saying, "Speak while you are angry, and you may make the best speech you ever regretted.") Also, people watching and listening to you will pick up your nonverbal cues. You can't completely hide your emotions.

All of us have nonverbal signals we are unaware of, e.g., twisting a ring, tapping our feet, rubbing a nose, backing up slightly, looking away or cupping a left hand. Most occur when we are becoming irritated, angry or nervous. Self awareness of these nonverbal signals does not mean you should go through your life worrying about them. Just be aware of them when you are in emotional/difficult communications.

One easy way to tune up your *self awareness* nonverbal skills is to ask someone close to you to observe how your body language or voice changes when you are emotional. Or videotape yourself, then watch the video for your nonverbal signals. Few people enjoy this experience, but if you can keep your sense of humor, it's a great learning technique.

Nonverbal Observation Skills

Nonverbal observation skills are a form of intelligence gathering and are important when you are dealing with the emotions arena. You should first be aware of the negative emotion, adapt to it on the spot, and apply the appropriate communication skills.

An important observation skill is keeping *"big eyes, big ears and a small mouth,"* particularly in the emotions arena. Your ears won't get you in trouble, but your mouth might! If your stakeholders start calming down, your mouth can become more active as you start discussing facts. Nonverbal observation skills include observing stakeholder's face, hands, posture, space, eye contact, various body movement changes and voice changes. If someone is angry, you can't move to facts until they have calmed down. Your judgment of their readiness to hear facts is based on your nonverbal skills – your "big eyes and big ears."

A key principle of nonverbal observation skills is no one gesture alone/by itself usually means a thing!

A key principle of nonverbal observation skills is *no one gesture usually means a thing!* For example, folded arms could mean closed off, stand-offish, defensive, angry, they are cold, they are comfortable, bored (have you ever seen anyone fall asleep with their arms folded?), just to name a few. As you observe the folded arms, what else is going on with their body, voice and, in some instances, their interaction with others?

Another key principle of nonverbal observation is *changes* in body, voice, space, eye contact, etc., frequently mean something. For example, if someone suddenly starts speaking faster, it might mean they are nervous, they are not telling the truth, they noticed you weren't listening and decided to quickly end the conversation, or they just saw a clock/watch and realized they were running out of time. In this situation, good nonverbal observation skills will first notice the voice change, think about why they sped up, then look and listen for other changes in voice or body. This is important information (intelligence) for you in challenging communications.

People cannot project one emotion with their voice and project an opposite emotion with their body/face.

Voice and Body Connection

Acknowledging the voice and body are connected is another key principle of nonverbal observation skills. People cannot project one emotion with their voice and project an opposite emotion with their body or face.

For example, say out loud, "Would you like to go to dinner?" First state this sentence in an upbeat tone; make your voice go up on the last three words, "go to dinner". When you do this, your eyes probably opened a bit, your eyebrows raised, and you had a positive expression on your face. Now repeat the question and drop your voice lower when saying the last three words, "go to dinner," and at the same time try to make your face positive/happy. You probably can't make your face look genuinely happy if you really dropped your voice when saying "go to dinner." This is a good example of how the voice and body are connected. So when you are observing others in risk communication, what voice/body connection did you see/hear? Yogi Berra said, "You can learn a lot just by watching." Expanding on Yogi's point: "You can learn a lot by just watching and listening."

Finally, "big eyes and ears" are very important in group settings. In general, how is the group reacting to you and your fellow communicators? If someone in the group gets rude or angry, what is the reaction by the rest of the group? Or if you sense you are not being listened to, what will you do? There are many other nonverbal aspects like these for group interaction.

Active Listening

Active listening skills are a very important component for your nonverbal skills. What are people REALLY saying? Active listening requires awareness of voice speed, tone, pitch, word emphasis, phrases, tics, emotions behind the words, mumbling, how a sentence is ended, etc. This is particularly important in terms of *changes* in any of these. As noted, changes in voice and body usually mean something.

In the case of word emphasis, think of the sentence, "I didn't say this base would close." There are seven different meanings depending on which *word is emphasized*. For example, if the word "I" is emphasized, its sounds like the person delivering the message is saying the base is closing, but they didn't say it. If the word "this" is emphasized, it sounds like another base is closing. If the word "close" is emphasized, it sounds like the base isn't closing, but something is going to happen there.

Say the sentence, "I love you." three different times. Each time *emphasize a different word* and see what different meanings you get. Also, say the sentence by ending the last word in the form of a question. In that instance it sounds like, "There's no way I love you!"

Another example: The sentence – "Oh". What does that mean? The *emotion* put behind the word will tell you the meaning of that sentence. The emotions can range from scared, angry, sad, surprised, disgusted, etc.

When people use *phrases* indicating information you haven't heard before, this may mean something. Phrases such as, "Oh, by the way," or "Oh, just one more thing," or "To be perfectly honest." Sometimes, it is not a phrase, but a word such as, "but" or "however," which means something.

These are just a few examples of the aspects of active listening and aspects of voice. If we don't have "big ears." we'll miss the intention of the message.

5C. Traps to Avoid

In the three arenas of risk communication (emotions, agendas, perception of risk), there are numerous traps to avoid. Many of these traps are not a problem in normal conversation, like humor.

Traps to Avid

1. Humor
2. Negatives
3. Hedges
4. Guarantees/assurances
5. Jargon
6. Cost-benefit comparisons
7. Talking too much
8. "Pushing Back" at them
9. Money
10. Afraid to say "I don't know"
11. Taking it personally/being defensive/becoming irritated or angry

1. Humor

Humor is an effective form of communication in many situations. After dinner speakers frequently start speeches with jokes or humorous anecdotes. Unfortunately, humor doesn't work in most risk communication situations. Humor won't work when you are dealing with stakeholders' emotions, like anger, fear, worry, concern or irritation. We certainly did not get or want any humor from President Bush or Mayor Giuliani on 9/11.

Most traps in Risk Communication are not traps in other communications.

Aren't there situations in Risk Communication where humor is okay? "It depends," as is often the case in the field of risk communication.

In the five levels of relationships with stakeholders, humor would not be effective in the first three levels: 1) highly adversarial (emotions rule), 2) tense/skeptical, 3) straddling/but open to dialogue. However, in 4) partnership and 5) supportive, are situations where humor is effective. Even then, the humor should be *self effacing*: aim it towards you, not the stakeholder.

2. Negatives

Research indicates that *negative words and phrases dominate positive words and phrases*. Negative words and phrases are more vivid, more memorable and more emotionally arousing. Look at the front page of most newspapers in the United States or watch the TV evening news. You will see there is a lot more negative news than positive. Hence the phrases, "negative news sells" or "if it bleeds, it leads." Another example is gossip. Gossip occurs in all human cultures and tends to dwell more on the negative than the positive.

What does this mean for you and your fellow risk communicators? First, recognize negatives dominate. If you repeat a negative (unexploded, poison, death, cancer, destruction or lethal) over and over, yet have a positive message on controlling that risk, the repetition of the negative may overwhelm the positives. The stakeholders' perception of the risk goes the wrong way. This is called "mental noise." For example, if you start a discussion with "The chances of your community being damaged and a few citizens possibly being killed by an explosion in our 'XYZ' facility are only 1 in a billion. Now, let me tell you about our safety, prevention and our emergency response programs to prevent that from happening." Many stakeholders will not hear your prevention program message. Instead, they will be emotionally hooked on "killed," "explosion," and the numerator of "1". The numerator becomes "me" or "us."

This example does not mean you should avoid being specific about the risk. Just don't start your message with the negative aspects of the risk and repeat the negative words and phrases. Instead, focus first on your preventive efforts and plans.

There is an exception in the use of negatives. If your communications purpose is to *change behavior* harmful to the stakeholder, the use of negatives is effective. Examples are discussions on smoking cessation, dieting, safe sex, using seat belts, etc. In this instance the dominance of negatives factor will help you accomplish your message mission of changing behavior.

3. Hedges

A hedge is indirectly "the numerator effect." Use of the hedge escalates the perception of risk from very unlikely to much more likely. Put yourself in this situation: you are on a very rough flight with an hour to land, and you ask the pilot, "Are we going to get there safely?" The pilot says something like, "probably," "hope so," or "could be." Those hedge words may increase your perception of personal risk. It becomes, "It will happen to me." Another example is before surgery, you ask the surgeon, "Am I going to be okay?" The surgeon says, "probably," "hope so," or "usually." What just happened to your perception of risk?

4. Guarantees/Assurances

Many questions fall into the generic category of *guarantee*: "I want you to guarantee me that…" "Isn't it better to be safe than sorry?" "Promise us this will never happen again." "Why can't you go to zero…?"Avoid starting with: "There are no guarantees in life," "We'll never get to zero," or "We can't promise you that wouldn't happen again."

Begin by explaining what you are doing to minimize the risk by describing your activities and/or commitment, i.e., what you are doing, planning, etc. If they continue to push for a yes or no guarantee, respond with: "No, I can't guarantee that 100%, but we are doing a lot. Let me give you another example of what we are doing…" People are usually not looking for is not a statistical analysis of the odds, but want to know if you and your organization are doing all you can. If you are going into surgery, you probably want to hear: "They are doing what they should be doing," or "They know what they are doing."

5. Jargon

The jargon trap in risk communication has a double impact. Not only does the stakeholder not understand the word or term you used, but they may think you are trying to confuse them or show how much knowledge you have relative to them. Although that is not your intent, it may be perceived that way. Jargon words and phrases are not just scientific or technical, e.g., di-hexyl pepperoni. It can also be relative terms, such as exceed, over, under, etc. Is "exceeding the limits set by a regulator" good or bad? Jargon can also be words common to you but not to the stakeholder, such as ordnance or groundwater.

6. Cost/Benefit Comparisons

The problem with cost/benefit discussions is it's usually your organization's costs and the stakeholders' benefit, which causes a disconnect. Stakeholders may believe there should be no limit to the amount spent for their families' safety and health or protection of property value. Cost/benefit discussions should not be avoided. If your stakeholders want to discuss cost/benefit, then you should be prepared. They may not like your answer, but it must be *open and hones*t and not devious. "Yes, we could have spent more money, but we didn't because…"

7. Talking Too Much

Abraham Lincoln said, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak out and remove all doubt." That humorous saying is a good reminder you can get in more trouble by talking rather than listening. The area where this trap applies the most in the arena of emotions. *This is where big eyes, big ears and a small mouth are important.* However, there are times when you *do* want to talk a lot. If you are in the risk communication arena of perception of risk, discussing facts, and the stakeholders are listening to you, keep talking for awhile. It's a golden opportunity for you to lay out the facts.

8. "Push Backs"

A "push back" is the stakeholders' perception you are putting the responsibility on the stakeholder to prove a point or resolve the issue. This is not your intent, but it can be perceived that way.

One aspect of push backs is they are usually statements that are quite normal in most conversations. Therefore, it's an easy trap to fall into. For example, in a challenging dialogue, you might say, "Where did you get that information/idea?" Stakeholders can perceive this statement as you challenging them or putting them down. This is not your intent. Another example, you might

EXAMPLES OF "PUSH BACKS"
Developed by Fulton Communications

INSTEAD OF SAYING…	SAY…
Could you be clearer?	*I'm not sure I understand, but I want to. Can you tell me more? I do want to work on this.*
I don't understand your point.	*I'm sorry. I want to make sure I understand.*
I haven't seen that. *That's news to me.*	*Perhaps I should have known that. I need to look at that/I will look into this."*
Why do you feel that way?	*I can see you're (upset/angry).*
Why do you think that?	*If I were in your situation, I'd feel that way, too.*
What you need to know is….	*We have some more information here….*
Calm down! I'll explain it to you. *If you had more information, we could….* *I wish you had told me that earlier.*	Nod head for a while. *I hear you.* *Yes/um-hum.*
We're not lying/hiding/being devious/misrepresenting.	*Go to a positive reversal.*

start a conversation by saying, "What you need to know is…" The response back from the stakeholder might be, "Oh, you think you know everything?" or "Wait, we've got something YOU need to know." A better start is, "We have some information here that might interest you or you requested."

Hundreds of statements can be potential push back statements in risk communication situations. The best way to avoid this trap is to flow the comment towards yourself and away from the stakeholder. See the table above for a few examples

9. Money
Money can be a trap with stakeholders because it leads you into the cost/benefit trap. It's your money and their benefit. If you say, "We've spent $2 million on XYZ," you may be asked, "Why did you stop there?" or "Why didn't you spend more?" Also, when you quote the amount of money, it can be perceived by some stakeholders you are bragging or showing what a burden it was on your organization. However, you should not avoid talking about money if you are asked. Simply say, "We spent $2 million dollars." Then stop talking and see how they react.

10. Afraid to say, "I don't know."
This is not a common trap because most risk communicators will say, "I don't know, but I'll find out/get someone to help you." However, some of us feel guilty if we don't have the answer. We will spin or embellish or duck the fact that we don't know. This comes across as dishonest, and the communicator may lose trust with the stakeholders.

11. Taking it Personally • Being Defensive • Becoming Irritated or Angry
These three traps are interrelated and occur when a risk communicator experiences a negative emotion towards the stakeholder or situation. If you suddenly get angry with a stakeholder or you are irritated before you even start the discussion because you've had a bad day, *you will fail*. If you fail, so will your team.

This set of interrelated traps may be the most important trap of all. Once a communicator personally experiences negative emotions over a sustained period of time, their other risk communication skills tend to erode. If we are angry, irritated, disgusted, bored or frustrated, we can't stay on point and concentrate on the challenging situations occurring. Stakeholders will observe the negative emotions and begin to wonder about us as well. It becomes a downward spiraling dynamic.

You may be thinking, "I agree, so how do I avoid these feelings? Give me a 'magic pill' to avoid the traps." The only magic pill is to do everything you can to *leave yourself outside.* By doing this, do not think about yourself, your history, your experiences, who you are, what happened that day that irritated you, etc. Instead focus on one thing: *your job at that moment as a communicator representing your organization.* Keep reminding yourself you are doing the best you can as a communicator and that's what is important. It's like giving yourself mental pats on the back.

5D. Explaining Science, Data and Facts

These four guidelines for factual discussions apply to the risk communication arena of risk perception.

1. To have a significant impact on changing stakeholders' perception of risk, you will need at least one or combinations of these three factors: familiarity, "control" and benefits, .

Familiarity means the stakeholders have some knowledge or understanding of what you are talking about. This could come from personal experience or previous interactions you have had with them which provide them with information, explanations or response to questions.

"Control" means they feel they can work with you on some level. This could be meetings, tours, getting information they requested, finding common ground on an issue, etc. "Control" has quotation marks because it does not mean you give stakeholders everything they want (control). However, by building a relationship with the stakeholder, they have more control than they did.

Benefits can be anything from jobs, community services, working together on community activities, assisting at work with a project, etc.

You don't need all three factors, but it will be very difficult to influence stakeholder's perception of risk without at least one of them. This applies to their perception of risks on issues such as safety, health, environmental, security, property value and others.

Other related factors regarding Risk Perception:

- Risks perceived to be voluntary are more acceptable than risks perceived as imposed.
- Risks perceived to be distributed fairly are more acceptable than risks perceived to be applied unfairly.
- Risks perceived to be natural, e.g., Mother Nature, are more acceptable than risks caused by humans.
- Risks perceived to be statistical are more acceptable than risks that are catastrophic.
- Risks perceived to be generated by a trusted source are more acceptable than risks generated by an untrusted source.
- Risks perceived to affect adults are more acceptable than risks perceived to affect children or the elderly.

2. Make sure you are using language people can understand. This is also covered in the Section 5C Traps to Avoid, Jargon.
Recognize some stakeholders process factual information differently than other stakeholders.

- Some stakeholders may not process verbal or written information easily, i.e., low cognitive skills. In this case, it would be more appropriate to conduct tours, show videos, have models, show photos, etc.
- Some stakeholders prefer quantification. They prefer numbers, graphs and charts.
- Some stakeholders prefer factual discussions to be more philosophical and subjective in nature.

What this means is *know your stakeholders*, then deliver your facts in the method (channels, vehicles, applications) most appropriate for them. (See Chapter 6 Message Development.)

3. If you are using numbers to explain facts, and the numbers are small, (one in a million or one in a billion) find a way to frame that number that is

Different Types of Risk Comparisons

a. Comparisons of the same risk at two different times.
- "The risk is 50% less than it was before we installed the new facilities, equipment, etc."
- "With our clean up plan, by this time next year, the risk will be cut in half."

b. Comparisons with a standard.
- "Exposure of workers to air toxic 'x' is well below the level the Occupational Safety and Health Administration considers safe."

c. Comparisons of doing versus not doing something.
- "If we buy the newest, most advanced equipment, the risk will be 'x.' If we don't, the risk will be 'y'."

d. Comparisons of alternative solutions to the same problem.
- "The risk associated with the incinerating of our waste is 'x'. The risk associated with using a landfill is 'y'."

e. Comparisons of risk with cost.
- "To reduce the risk posed by 50% would cost 'y' dollars."

f. Comparisons with other specific causes of the same disease, illness, or injury.
- "Air toxic 'x' produces far less lung cancer than exposure to natural background levels of geological radon."

familiar to the stakeholder. For example, if you are explaining a safety or environmental risk of "one in a million", explain that number relative to something they are familiar, such as 1 inch in 16 miles, 1 minute in 2 years, 1 automobile in bumper-to-bumper traffic 3,000 mile long line, or the number of seconds you live is approximately 31.5 years is only one in a billion, one drop of water in …
For scientists and others who use numbers in their work, you can talk directly about the numbers. In this case, the stakeholders' *familiarity* is already there.

4. Risk comparisons can be another way to explain factual data. A risk comparison is framing the risk the stakeholder is concerned about with another risk they are familiar with and to some degree accept. For example, a chest x-ray once a year versus radiation from the dirt in your installation.

There is a lot of literature on risk comparisons that indicates many risk comparisons do not work, particularly when relating the risk to something they voluntarily choose to do. For example, telling someone the risk is less risky than their personal risk of smoking, not dieting, not exercising or not wearing seatbelts, will usually not work. In fact, it may make them angry, thus leading you out of the arena of discussion of facts into the arena of emotions. Even though your risk comparison facts are correct, their attitude may be one of, "I choose to lead the life I do, but I have no *control* over what you impose on me." Before you decide to use a risk comparison, test it with key (one, two or three) stakeholders.

In summary, there are many verbal skills critical to effective risk communication:
- **Using the Generic Categories Guideline.**
- **Using the 4-Step Guideline.**
- **Tuning up and applying your nonverbal skills.**
- **Avoiding common traps.**
- **Learning techniques for explaining science, data and facts.**

SECTION 6: Message Development

Two key principles for developing messages in Risk Communication are:
1. Your message must be consistent with your communication mission/purpose.
2. Recognize the variety of vehicles, channels and applications available to deliver your messages. Test these options with a few key stakeholders before making your decision.

Principle 1: Communication Mission/Purpose

Your communication mission/purpose could range from:
- Raise awareness.
- Educate/inform.
- Achieve consensus.
- Change behavior.
- Change perception.
- Receive input.
- Others.

One comparative example: there is a big difference between *educating/informing* stakeholders versus *changing behavior*. Informing requires providing information in language, terms and methods understood by the stakeholder. On the other hand, changing behavior requires not only providing understandable information, but also requires motivational methods. This in turn requires understanding the "what" and "why" of their resistance to changing behavior (seat belt use, using equipment properly, tobacco cessation, diet, safe sex, shelter in place during an emergency, etc).

Principle 2: Recognizing the variety of message vehicles, channels and applications available

Once you determine your message *purpose/mission*, you have many ways to deliver those messages. Here is where input/ideas from stakeholders predicate the vehicles, channels and applications will work best. The variety of approaches, channels, vehicles and applications, is extensive. However, the selection of choices is not difficult if you are clear about your mission, message and purpose. You know your stakeholders and receive input from them about the best ways to deliver your messages.

Examples:
- Situations where the best *channel* is word of mouth.
- Situations where a third party support *channel* is the best way to communicate in that particular culture, e.g., a tribal leader.
- Situations where stakeholders like getting information from formal presentations, which include *applications,* such as exhibits, displays with graphs and fact sheets as back up information. *Applications* where

Message Vehicles, Channels & Applications

Message Vehicles
- Written
- Oral
- Visual
- Audience interaction
- Computer based applications
- Others?

Message Channels
- Media
- Advertising
- Public meetings
  - Restoration Advisory Boards
  - Information station meetings
  - Town hall type meetings
  - Informal
- Internet
- Employees, families
- Third-party supporters
- "Word of mouth"/informal
- Speaker bureaus
- Others?

Message Applications
- Exhibits and displays, posters
- Fact sheets
- Pamphlets/brochures/fact sheets
- Status reports
- Technical reports
- News releases
- Newsletters
- Web pages
- Public notices in newspapers
- Flyers posted in public locations
- Videos
- Journal articles by other parties that support your messages
- Formal or informal conversations and meetings
- Information packets with fact sheets, status reports, technical reports, site maps, etc.
- Others?

videos may be the best approach, e.g., trying to change behavior (smoking cessation or wearing seatbelts).
- Situations where the most effective *channel* is informal, but generally before and after formal meetings (*application*).

Developing Technical Reports
Technical reports are effective for those who understand and want to see more detailed data. Reports can meet the needs of several segments of your audience – those with extensive technical background, some technical background who would like more in-depth information, or those without technical background on the subject who are just interested in this type of information.
To meet the needs of these stakeholders, *organize your document from the back to the front*. That is, place the technical data – tables, lists of standards and quality assurance data – in appendices or supporting documents. This information will serve the expert. Then, use the information as a basis for a report that can be read at an eighth-grade level. This will serve the reader with some minimal background in the subject. Use the report information as a basis for a summary with a minimum of technical terminology. This summary should be able to be read at a sixth-grade level.

Provide a glossary, list of acronyms and index to help all readers. Provide additional information-identifying devices, such as introductions that summarize key points for each major section, transitions between sections, paragraphs and sentences and paragraphs with topic sentence.

Developing General Information Reports
(Status Reports)
If you decide to use printed risk communication materials, first consider how to organize messages, appropriate language, the use of the narrative style, and most importantly, know your audience. This list of information might be included in the materials.
- Nature of the risk.
- Alternatives to the action causing the risk and risks associated with these alternatives.
- Any uncertainties in the risk assessment.
- How the risk will be managed.
- Benefits of the risk, if any.
- Actions the stakeholders can take to mitigate or manage exposure to the risk.
- Contact point for more information.
- Glossary.
- Conversion table.
- “Helpful hints”.
- Index.
- List of related information.

Developing Newsletters
A newsletter is a series of articles related to a project or operation with a common application. They are especially effective for long-term projects with a similar group of stakeholders. E-mailed versions of newsletters can also be effective.

Guidelines:
- When first developing a newsletter, allow time in your schedule for approvals from all agencies involved. Because a newsletter represents an organization over a period of time, it often requires a number of approvals before the first issue is published, and sometimes for subsequent issues.
- Develop and maintain mailing lists. Be sure to include as many members of your audience as possible in your distribution. Update the list of names and addresses once or twice a year.
- Be consistent. Use the same words to describe the same place or situation, e.g., don’t call your environmental cleanup areas “source areas” in one issue and “sites” in another. Also, watch content. If you run a story about the planned opening of a new water treatment in June, don’t forget to follow up with a “grand opening” story in July. Lack of consistency can lead to a lack of credibility for your entire effort.
- Have a feedback section so readers can comment on what they think about the newsletter (content, format, clarity, other information, etc).

Developing Pamphlets, Booklets, and Fact Sheets
Pamphlets, booklets, and fact sheets are good applications for short-term, one-message communication efforts or for covering one aspect of a complex risk. Because they are short, they attract those who are put off by longer information materials.

Guidelines:
- By their nature, pamphlets, booklets and fact sheets have limited amount of space and should usually cover only one subject. Your audience’s needs will determine which subject should be covered.
- Make these forms self-contained. Pamphlets, booklets and fact sheets are meant to be picked up, carried away and read quickly.
- Distribute these materials where your audience lives or in meetings. Use direct mail, but don’t overlook the power of placing packets in other locations (meetings)

where your audience can pick them up and read them. Medical offices, libraries, local businesses, community center, etc. are places where your audience can see and pick up such information.

Developing Exhibits and Displays, Posters
Posters and displays may be appropriate, particularly in public meetings. The space available may be limited, but these risk informational materials can strongly reinforce key concepts.

Guidelines:
- Any written message in posters or displays should be in the language of the audience – at their reading level and addressing their concerns.
- The message should be simple and clear, so it can be read quickly, given the limited space in display visuals.
- All graphic elements should reinforce your mesage's mission.
- Always include sources of additional information since the risk message space will be limited. This could mean a phone number, address or web site for your organization. Including this information helps empower your audience to take action.

How to Prepare Technology-Assisted Communication
Technology-assisted communication uses high technology to disseminate risk information or allow a member of the audience to seek and receive risk information. Computers and other forms of technology have become increasingly popular tools for disseminating information about risks, products and operations. Web sites raise risk awareness and provide options to mitigate risks. Telebriefings, streaming audio and video convey risk information quickly to media outlets and consumers. Listservs, CDs and wireless devices deliver multimedia content for training, health information and alerts. Electronic forms invite stakeholders to provide comments on risk decisions. Computer models help them calculate their own risks, and group software aids the decision-making process.

Technology-assisted communication has the advantage of disseminating a large amount of information, which members of the audience can tailor to their individual needs. Once developed, it can be updated and revised more easily than materials developed through written communication methods. If graphic elements are properly built in, these applications can be as eye-catching as full-color ads or displays, yet carry as much or more information as traditional information materials. With current computer capabilities, speeches and videos can be incorporated, making the applications very versatile.

If your goals are to allow people to see all of the data and develop their own perceptions or to disseminate information quickly, technology-assisted communication may be a good choice. However, there are some instances where it may not be the best risk communication method. Some applications must run on a fairly sophisticated computer making mass dissemination impractical. Also, computer use in the U. S. is less than universal, making it difficult to reach all audiences. Additionally, certain stakeholders may still find using a computer intimidating.

Message Mapping
One tool to prepare communicators to explain factual data (verbal and written) is message mapping. This tool applies to the Perception of Risk arena and issues with some complexity or extensive factual background. For verbal communication, message mapping **is not a substitute for the skills outlined in Section 5: 5A, 5B, 5C, and 5D.** You can have the world's best message map, but it will not help if you fall into some of the traps in 5D, or you will miss some key nonverbal observations in 5C, or you cannot handle the risk communication arena of Emotions.

Message maps organize factual information in a hierarchal layout. Each layer of the hierarchy has more supporting facts for the previous layer. An example is shown on the next page. This example is a draft only. It was developed as part of an on-going federal government sponsored project being conducted by several groups, including the Center for Risk Communication. To be more complete, this sample map would require a third level of detail: three proof points for each supporting fact.
The benefits to the communicator for message mapping are:
- Provides a quick outline of the relevant facts on an issue.
- Provides a sense of how much factual detail to provide various stakeholders, i.e., know when to stop. Some stakeholders just want the headline. Others want more detail. In a public meeting, some stakeholders may want just the first or second layer in your message map. However, some in the audience may want a more. In that instance, you don't want to turn off the majority of the audience with a lengthy discussion, (Level 3 or 4 of your message map). Your response might be, "I have more detail, but let's talk after the meeting," or "We have the information you requested on the back table. I'll be glad to show it to you when we take a break"
- Assists in getting ready for a challenging communication session. When you lay out a message map, some

Message Map
Stakeholders: Military Personnel, Family Members, Health Care Providers
from: www.anthrax.mil

THE ANTHRAX THREAT IS REAL.

Your health and safety are our number one concerns.	Anthrax vaccine is safe, as safe as other vaccines.	Anthrax vaccine protects people from anthrax infection.
★ Healthy troops complete their missions. Vaccines keep you and your team healthy. ★ Vaccines have kept troops healthy since the days of George Washington. ★ Vaccines offer a layer of protection in addition to antibiotics and other measures needed for certain members of the Armed Forces.	★ Many people get bothersome side effects where any vaccine is injected. ★ People report headaches, muscle aches and other temporary symptoms after any vaccine. ★ Study after study shows people vaccinated against anthrax are as healthy as unvaccinated people.	★ We know anthrax vaccines work because it protected mill workers in a study conducted by CDC scientists. ★ Anthrax vaccine protected animals from inhalational anthrax in multiple studies. ★ Anthrax vaccine works basically the way other vaccines do.

of the points in layer 2 or 3, etc., will trigger, "Oh, they may ask us about that. We need to develop a response."
- For crisis communication planning, e.g., Pandemic Flu, it enhances the communicators' ability to quickly and clearly respond to critical situations. In a crisis, *people need clear, consistent understanding and accurate information*.

Guidelines on Message Mapping

- Each layer should have two to four messages. Many supporters of message mapping recommend three, but you shouldn't force a third message if you only have two nor should you drop a fourth message if it is as important/supportive as the other three. We do recommend staying in the two to four range for the sake of simplicity and order.
- Test some of your message maps with a few key stakeholders.
- If you use grade level tests, develop one or two grade levels below the audience. In a mixed audience, this is challenging, so point 2 above is important.
- Use short sentences. We suggest no more than 15 words, usually 10 or less.
- In each layer, put the most important message first. "Most important" should be based on what is most important to the stakeholder.

In summary, for message development, make sure your messages are consistent with your communications mission/purpose. Test your many vehicles, applications and channel options with a few key stakeholders

before making your final decision.

Media Communication Process

The media communication process is unique to any other stakeholder group. Unlike other stakeholders, if the media asks you a question you did not plan to discuss, you do not answer that question. Instead you should use short bridging statements to get to your message (see Appendix I). You may be thinking, "But won't others see you didn't answer the question?" The answer is "yes," but if you say that first, the media story may not be want you wanted to convey.

The media communication process is like a fork in the road. You have two choices: you can go down the road of your messages/points, or you can go down a reporter's road which varies from your messages. The latter may include stories of controversy, conflict, drama, speculation or rumors you don't want to discuss.

No one can learn the media communication process without training and continued practice. You can't "wing" this skill, but with sufficient practice, you can learn and apply this skill. For those of you who could be interviewed by the media, but don't know how to bridge to your messages/points, then, *"Beware."*

Understanding the Media

The media is a business. Here are some facts about their business:

- Highly competitive.
- Needs to keep the audience's attention frequently with negative news, drama, controversy and conflict.
- Covers viewpoints of all parties, not just your truths.
- Has limited background on your organization.
- Usually has limited scientific and technical background on your subject.
- Wants to be accurate, but needs your help, (provide fact sheets and other information about your industry).
- Doesn't like an information vacuum and will fill it whether you help them or not.
- Usually magnifies small negative aspects of a situation.
- Has limited airtime and must deal in sound bites – usually negative.

What can you do for the media?

- Understand their situations and needs.
- Provide technical information, information about your organization and contacts in your organization.
- Provide visits to your location.
- Show them how to help cover an emergency.

Take Control of the Interview Before the Interview

- Determine who will be asking the questions.
- Ask which topics they want to cover.
- Caution that you are not the right person to interview for topics you cannot discuss (due to lack of knowledge, litigation, trade secrets, etc.).
- Discuss interview length and format.
- Ask if others will be interviewed for this story.
- Volunteer to get information they need if you can and if it supports your messages.
- Decide your key messages.
- Anticipate toughest questions.
- Assume microphones and tape recorders are *always* on.
- Decide what information you will send them before the interview to help them with accuracy.

"Musts" in Media Interviews

- Get your conclusion and supporting facts in early.
- Answer only the questions you want to – BRIDGE to your messages.
- Be honest.
- Avoid the "traps". See "Media Traps to Avoid."

After the Interview

- Volunteer to be available if a reporter wants to go over the story.
- Call reporters if stories are very inaccurate and politely point out what is wrong.

Media Traps to Avoid

- Length of answers/opening statements. Length should be as long as it takes to get your message out.
- Jargon.
- Silence. The media goes silent hoping you will fill in the silence. Remain silent if you have completed your message.
- Hedging – "maybe," "possibly," "could be," "sort of."
- Humor.
- Risk comparisons.
- Guarantees and promises.
- Technical details and debates.
- Personal opinion.
- Afraid to say "I don't know."
- Money/cost benefit – "Why didn't you spend more?"
- Speak for higher authority.

- Speak for third party or another agency.
- Overusing negative words or phrases.
- Rumors.
- Speculation.
- Chummy – "Off the record."
- Mike "off" – assume it's *always* on.
- "Lose it" – get angry, irritated, defensive, blame others.
- "Can we go there?" – If they want to see something at your location, what will you say/do if they ask?

(See Appendix I for "Building Bridges".)

Crisis Communication Traps

- There is an information vacuum.
- The media is the public's primary source of information.
- The cost of not communicating with the media during a crisis is high because others will tell their version of what happened, is happening and speculate why. You *must get out in front of those stories* and tell your story and facts.
- Communicate with the media early and often in the initial phases of a crisis.
- Many of their questions will be "*how/why?*" You should focus on "*what, when, where*" and stress cooperative efforts.

Being Prepared for any Media Crisis Coverage

- Decide who will be the primary and secondary contacts on site and how long will it take for them to be in place.
- Secondary contact will fill in while/if the primary spokesperson is en route.
- Decide how to coordinate consistent messages if other parties decide to talk with the media (local emergency responders, agencies, political figures, etc.)
- Decide what your headquarters communications personnel will be doing. Will they defer to you or be speaking to another part of the media at the same time? If so, coordinate consistent messages.
- Have your potential secondary media communicators trained in media crisis communications. They should practice this type of communication at least twice a year.

Pre-Crisis Interview Preparation – On the Way to the Scene

- Determine your one or two key points.
- Don't try to put too much (too many small details) in your head.
- Provide your name and position.
- Show empathy (concern, regret, sorry for the inconvenience, disruption, tragedy).
- Stick to *what* happened, *where* it happened, and *when* it happened, including impact on operating personnel and community.
- Avoid "*who*" (injuries, fatalities) until family members have been notified.
- Avoid "*how*" or "*why*" questions, "We don't know. Clearly we will find out/investigate…"
- Decide where will you stand relative to the activity near you.
- *Never, never* speculate.

During the Crisis Interview

- Try to have a brief written statement. If not, have it in your head.
- Determine your one or two key points.
- Don't try to put too much in your head (too many small details).
- Provide your name and position.
- Provide how often will you update the media, if at all. Every 30 minutes? Every hour?
- Start with empathy. Acknowledge the impact, "We have had a major fire/accident that hurt two people." Then stress cooperative efforts with other agencies, etc.
- Stick to *what* happened, *where* it happened and *when* it happened, including impact on operating personnel and community.
- Avoid *who* (injuries, fatalities), until family members have been notified.
- Avoid *how* or *why* questions, "We don't know. Clearly we will find out/investigate…"
- Every time the media starts down their road (negatives or speculation), you must bridge back to your positive message of *what*, *when*, *where* cooperative efforts and when you'll provide an update.
- Stress fast response by responders (your organization's or other organizations'), if that is the case.
- Emphasize what's being done to correct the problem and again, mention cooperative efforts.
- Try to speak with the conclusion first, and facts supporting the conclusion second. "Our top priority is the health of... Here's what has been done to bring this situation under control…"
- *Never, never* appear to be covering up, hiding something or stonewalling. If you do this, nothing else you say will believed by the public.
- Remember, *how* you say is as important as *what* you say.
  - Don't speak too fast.
  - Try not to move around.
  - Look at the reporter, not the camera or the background.

- Don't smile, be serious.
- Project confidence.
- Know what is behind you.
- Square up your body.
- Lean in slightly.

- Avoid the common traps. (See Media Traps to Avoid).
- Tell them when you'll give them an update. (Frequent updates are important because the media will fill an information vacuum with rumors and speculation.).
- Have a sense of how long you will talk to them. Two minutes? Five minutes? Fifteen minutes? When their questions become repetitive, close the interview. "That's all the information I have right now. I need to check on the situation. I'll be back to talk with you in X minutes. Thank you." They may keep asking questions as you leave. Don't answer.

Post Crisis Interview

- Call the reporter and thank them, if you thought the coverage was fair and balanced. Remember balanced means it didn't just reflect your viewpoints, but your viewpoints were covered.
- Call the reporter if the story appeared to be highly inaccurate, particularly if some of the technical and scientific details were incorrect. Tell them you would like to work with them to get this technical and scientific background more accurate in the future.
- Decide if you will have a media panel discussion later (once you have completed your investigation).

(See Appendix II for "Typical Crisis Communication Questions".)

In summary, learn and practice the Media Communication Process before talking with the Media.

SECTION 8:
Cultural Communication

Two key principles of cross cultural communication.

1. Learn about the culture from a member of that culture.
The best way to prepare for communication with another culture is from members of that culture, not from a book. Another good source could be a fellow employee who has spent significant time in that culture. The team member's insight will be useful and should be solicited, but it will probably not be as insightful as communication with actual members of that culture.

2. Cross cultural communication usually occurs once you leave your organization's culture.
Cultural differences are not just with other countries, ethnic groups or indigenous groups. Cultural differences can exist with any community whose culture is different from your organization's culture.

Culture is a group of behaviors, values and beliefs held by a group that define how they conduct life/operate.

What is Culture?

One definition of culture is a group of behaviors, values and beliefs held by a group that define how they conduct life or operate. It's a common identity that is pervasive, yet hidden. Many people think of culture as country, ethnicity or tribal, but it's much more extensive. For example, your organization has a culture you quickly learned when you joined the organization. Nobody handed you "stone tablets" on how the organization's culture operated (unwritten rules, how success is achieved, how things really get done or boundaries), but you learned it quickly. Cultures can be as varied as United States soccer moms, Tahiti, the National Football League, a Native American tribe and Wall Street. Therefore, many of us are members of different cultures at the same time.

One structural model of culture is a water level (Fig 3). Above the water are the *cultural behaviors*. These are the things we see clearly above the cultural water level, and include how people dress, eat, walk, play, space, arts, architecture, music, dance, language, celebrations, etc. Below the water are the cultural aspects that are harder to see and understand. These factors drive the behaviors above the water. These are called *cultural values* and *core beliefs*.

Values determine what is right or wrong and desirable versus undesirable in a culture. Laws and rules are derived from these values. Values include the importance of work, importance of family (the relative importance of children versus elders), money, security, education, family, religion, morals, ethics, role of government or separation of church from state or not.

The value component of culture has more details. Look at the value of family. Two different cultures could say family is an important value, yet the family interaction is different in each culture.

In one culture, "It is important to provide for the family, and I work long hours for financial security. The amount of time I spend with my family is not important. What's important is how I use that limited time with them." Another culture might say, "It's important that I spend a lot of time with my family. I could make more money if I worked harder or longer, but I won't. Work is not as important as long as we get by okay." (Needs concluding statement)

Core beliefs include:
- value of time (is time limited or plentiful?),
- doing versus being (live to work or work to live?),
- mastery of nature versus harmony with nature
- emotional expression (what level of emotional expression is acceptable?)
- one truth versus many truths
- individual versus group.

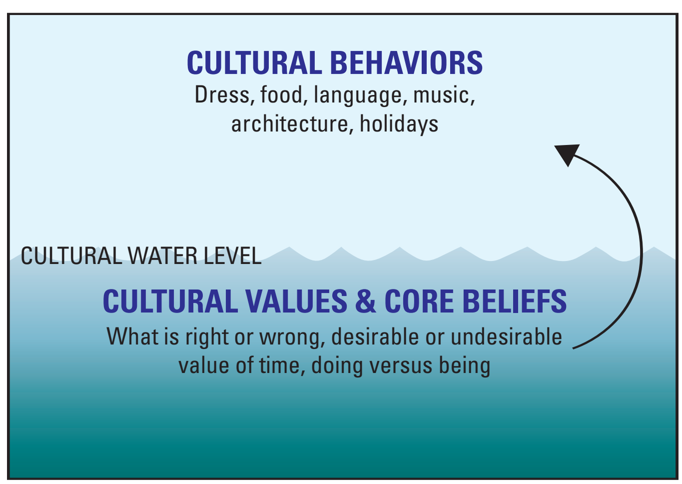

Fig 3

Cultural Traps

When communicating in a different culture, there are two traps to avoid:

- Weirdness factor.
- Ethnocentric factor.

The *weirdness factor* is seeing the behavior above the water as weird or wrong, rather than interesting. This is a natural reaction because as children we are taught a series of behaviors (eating, dressing, talking, etc.) that are the "right" way to do things. We get corrected when we step out of those boundaries. So as adults, when we are in a different culture and see a behavior that was wrong for us as children, we may see that behavior as weird/wrong.

It is better to view cultural differences as interesting rather than "weird.

For example, if we travel to another culture and see people eating a salad with their hands and smacking their lips, our tendency is to see this as sloppy eating. If we understood the values and core beliefs of their culture, we would probably find out why they eat that way, and find it interesting, not weird. We may encounter similar weird or wrong feelings if people talk louder, stand closer, or dress differently, etc.

The *ethnocentric factor* is trying to figure out a different culture from our own lenses. Our lenses of culture are frequently all we have since it is life as we have experienced up to that point. This trap is hard to avoid unless you gain knowledge from members of the other culture. For example, someone may come from a culture where if someone states they agree on a plan or a decision, this usually means they are "on board." There are other cultures where that doesn't necessarily mean they are "on board" because it's impolite in that culture to disagree.

Or someone may come from a culture where it's impolite to start a meeting or a party one hour late, while in another culture, it is impolite to start on time. Another may come from a culture where building relationships through informal discussions before conducting business is a waste of time, while in another culture it is an important value. Two people shouting at each other can be disturbing, though in that culture, it is the normal volume level they use to conduct business or talk informally.

A business news article in *JAN-2006* sighted Wal-Mart having to make some cultural adjustments for their stores in Germany. According to this article, the customers in Germany were used to fending for themselves and resented the friendly greetings they were receiving in the store aisles. The article continued that as a rule the German customer didn't like employees to touch their purchases and packed their bags at the check out stations. They preferred to pack their own groceries.

One German customer was quoted as saying, "I'm not used to someone stuffing and carrying my bag. I can do that myself." Wal-Mart may have assumed that everyone liked friendly greetings and help with their bags. This would be an ethnocentric trap. Since then, according to news articles, Wal-Mart exited the German market for several reasons, including cultural reasons.

The *weirdness* and *ethnocentric* traps are challenging. Here are two solutions in planning dialogue with other cultures: 1) above all find cultural differences interesting and 2) find out what to do about the differences from a stakeholder within that culture. The best approach is to have an informative discussion with these stakeholders.

During this discussion, first, be clear about your mission. Determine if they think your mission is worthwhile. In one case study, a meeting mission was to communicate with several communities about air emissions from a chemical plant. It was assumed all the adjacent communities and associated groups (organizations) would be interested. Meetings were developed about air emissions and health for all stakeholder groups.

The wrong meeting mission existed for two cultural groups not interested in air emissions. One group (a community) was a very low income community made up of non-US citizens from Mexico and Central America. A town hall meeting was conducted in Spanish about air emissions. The community members were very polite and asked few questions. However, they weren't interested in learning about the air they were breathing. They were interested in economics; jobs. They were also interested in courses in English as a Second Language. In hindsight, how could this group have been misread? It was the *ethnocentric trap*. "Aren't most communities living around this chemical plant thinking about air emissions?" The answer was not necessarily.

Another cultural group that was misread was the realtors in this city. Most of the realtors were not concerned about air emissions. Many of them had grown up in areas with chemical plants and generally aware the air emissions had been significantly reduced over the years.

Their concern was the large numbers of managers/supervisors/chemical personnel at the chemical plant who no longer lived in the community. They could easily commute from higher income surrounding communities 20 and 30 miles away. This was a disappointing trend the realtors had observed over the past several years. The realtor's cultural group wanted better opportunities to make a sales pitch to purchase homes in this city.

So, for the community/groups cases of non citizens and realtors, the mission was wrong.

Once you have an understanding and agreement on the mission, it's time to determine how to accomplish the mission. What is your plan? Your plan is your goals. Will stakeholders communicate with you in any particular order? And *how, when, where* will you communicate with them? Do you use third parties?

If your communications mission is to *provide information*, ask how people in that culture generally receive their information. Group or individual? Electronic? Fact sheets? Meetings? When and where do they like to receive their information? If it's a meeting, how are meetings conducted, where, etc?

Sometimes churches are the primary locations to discuss issues and receive information. This may indicate religion is a strong value in the culture. Sometimes information has to be passed down through a hierarchical or informal chain. In one case, a cultural leader said, "We keep getting these fact sheets, but we don't read them. That's not how we communicate. Instead, come talk to us."

Communications Mission

If your communications mission is to *hear concerns* about an issue, how you proceed will depend on many cultural factors. Again, all factors noted above for the mission of *providing information* would apply. In addition, you may find how concerns are expressed are different from what you are used to at work. Will the dialogue be mostly linear or oblique? By the way, if you come from a culture with a linear type of dialogue, avoid the "weirdness" trap of seeing oblique dialogue as "rambling".

Sometimes concerns will be expressed in stories. If so, how will you interpret the meaning of this story? In these instances you will need help from a member of the culture. Will the concerns be highly vocal because face saving is involved or high emotional expression is normal in that culture?
These are just two simple communication mission examples: *providing information* and *hearing concerns*. There are other possible communication missions, e.g., delivering bad news about…, building consensus around the issue…, or conducting informal two way dialogue about…. The key is to *know* your stakeholders, which includes knowing their culture. Then start a communication plan accordingly.

In summary, recognize understanding your stakeholder's culture is an important aspect of Risk Communication.

SECTION 9:
Planning and Conducting Meetings

What is a Meeting?

Four definitions of meetings:
- To do or make something, to participate.
- A formal assemblage of a group, a greeting.
- To come together by arrangement.
- Any gathering of people, whose end result could, should or will impact your organization's mission. This could be your specific job mission or your organization's mission.

Nine Principles of Successful Meetings

1. Have a clearly defined *purpose* or *mission* for each meeting that is understood by all participants.
2. Plan for worst case scenarios that could occur in your meetings.
3. Identify and involve key stakeholders in planning, conducting, and evaluating your meetings. (See Section 10.)
4. Train your communicators in Risk Communication skills. (See Sections 4, 5, 6, and 7.)
5. Develop messages that support your meeting's mission/purpose. (See Section 6.)
6. Manage the Media. (See Section 7.)
7. Understand and prepare for Cross Cultural Communications. (See Section 8.)
8. For public meetings, determine the type of public meeting you want including a detailed checklist.
9. Evaluate your meeting results.

Principles 1, 2, 8, and 9 are outlined below.

Principle 1
Have a clearly defined purpose or mission for each meeting that is clearly understood by all participants.

First, determine what the *purpose/mission* of your meeting is. How often have you attended a meeting where everyone did not know why the meeting was called? The *purpose* of the meeting should be made clear up front. For example, the purpose could be:
- Making a decision between choice A and B.
- Providing information (a status report) or a new policy.
- Analyzing information?
- Providing information and test reaction (answer questions).
- Making a sale.
- Correcting information.
- Apologizing for an incident and take the heat.
- Others.

The *purpose or mission* is critical because it establishes how you will conduct the meeting, setting meeting boundaries, planning for worst case situations and how you will measure success. Once the purpose or mission is established, then it is time to plan the details of the meeting.

The details of the meeting include:
- Worst case scenario preparedness
- How to involve key stakeholders
- Communicator skills training,
- Preparing for cross cultural communication
- Managing the media, message development
- A detailed checklist and evaluation, particularly for public meetings.

All of these follow in subsequent sections or have been outlined in Sections 4, 8 and 10.

Principle 2
Plan for worst case scenarios that could occur in your meetings.

The vast majority of the work done for successful meetings is done before the meeting. This includes planning for the worst. Time and time again when

Types of Meetings

Internal
- A briefing with Command.
- A brainstorm session with co-workers.
- Routine staff meetings.
- Project team meetings.
- Crisis meetings.
- One-on-one or small informal meetings with fellow employees on an issue/problem/plans.
- Family members.
- Others

External
- Public meetings such as Restoration Advisory Boards, open town hall or information station type meetings, etc.
- Public hearings required by regulations.
- Meetings with regulators – formal or informal.
- Meetings with customers, clients, suppliers, contractors, etc.
- Informal meetings with community members over a cup of coffee or dropping by, etc.
- Media interviews.
- Others

people who planned and conducted a failed meeting or a meeting that "could have gone better," comments are heard such as, "We didn't anticipate…," "We didn't think that would happen," "Who would have thought that…," or "There's nothing you can do when they/he/she does…"

Worst Case Scenario Planning – Corporations and Government Agencies do contingency planning for potential crisis situations. They consider the worst could happen and conduct simulations, frequently called emergency preparedness/planning. Contentious meetings with internal or external stakeholders need this same approach. Most of us are pretty good at using this worst case scenario approach when we have meetings, such as high level briefings or presentations to our command. We anticipate challenging questions, prepare responses or role play our responses in our head. We sometimes try to gather intelligence on what the command might ask. These same techniques should apply to any contenious meeting.

Most of the work done for successful meetings is done before the meeting, including planning for the worst.

Another aspect, particularly for public meetings, is establishing the difference between *unacceptable behavior/language* and *rude, but briefly acceptable behavior/language*. These boundaries must be clear with your team. The key term in the second category is how long is "brief"? If the vast majority of the public crowd starts demonstrating, does "brief" become as long as they keep it up or when you try to stop it? Usually, but not always, the former is a better approach.

On the other hand, if a very small proportion of the group is disruptive, and the rest of the group isn't supportive of their behavior, how do you respond to the unacceptable behavior? There are different approaches, such as take a break, use a facilitator, call security, ask the rest of the group what they would like to do or move on to the next questioner. The point is there is no one consistent way for handling these types of situations. Therefore, they need to be thought out, practiced and discussed with other key stakeholders. (See Principle 3.)

If there is anything that can "blow you and your team out of the water," it is one communicator not able to handle the worst case scenario situation. It's analogous to "everyone goes down with the ship if one person sinks the ship". Everyone, whether a primary or secondary communicator on your team, must be prepared verbally (analytically) and nonverbally (emotionally).

By far the biggest trap in worst case scenarios is a communicator *taking things personally*. They become irritated, angry or disgusted and say or do something that hurts all of you and your organization's mission. The best way to avoid this is for everyone on the communications team to *leave themselves "outside the door," mentally and emotionally*. Everyone on your team should enter the meeting as a communicator representing their organization with a role to play in the meeting.

Even if your communicators are ready, there is one last aspect of worst case scenario planning: *how you and your team communicate with each other in front of a contentious group*. Once your roles and responsibilities in the meeting are clearly defined, you should determine how you will handle areas of disruptions; who will do what, and how you will handle the gray areas where who will be responding to specific questions or situations is not clear. Do you need a moderator or facilitator? A good moderator can do basic gatekeeping, such as time management and following basic meeting rules. A facilitator is more capable of handling the group dynamics, as well as the worst case scenarios type disruptions. See Principle 8 for the differences between a moderator and a facilitator.

A good technique for Worst Case Scenario planning is *role playing/murder board*. There's no such thing as "winging it" if you anticipate there will be many challenging questions and statements or even disruptions. The role play should include critiquing the verbal and nonverbal responses to these difficult questions and statements or even possible disruptions. The nonverbal responses, communicators' body language and how you say things, are the most important.

Principle 8
For Public Meetings, Determine the Type of Public Meeting You Want, Including a Detailed Planning Checklist.

You have many options for conducting the more formal types of public meetings and public hearings. Key factors for these type meetings:

- Involve the stakeholders. Get their input on your meeting plan, location, logistics, time, etc. (See Section 10.)
- Receive input from legal, government affairs, regulatory affairs and other functions in your

organization on public meeting/public hearing requirements. This may involve regulations and requirements, such as the Open Public Meeting Act for public meetings, as well as others.
- Make sure your communicators are prepared. You can have the best plan (logistics, physical layout, handouts, food), and one communicator can "blow up" the whole plan by not being prepared.
- A detailed planning checklist may be helpful. (See an example of a detailed planning checklist later in this section).

A town hall meeting has the presenters at the front of the meeting room. The sakeholders are in one group. An information station meeting has various stations located apart from each other in a large room. Subject matter experts are present with materials to provide two-way communications on the subject matter. Stakeholders are usually divided among the stations.

Public hearings are a specific type of public meeting, usually required by regulations. A public hearing involves public testimony or comment, and can include obtaining public input on what your organization is doing, e.g., a project set to expand. For more information concerning public hearings and the differences between public hearings and public meetings, go to the appropriate functions in your organization, e.g, government affairs, regulatory affairs, public affairs, legal or whomever has this type of expertise in your organization.

Public meetings have several components:

a. Purpose
b. Structure
c. Detail planning checklist
d. Communicator skills training/rehearsals for the more challenging meeting

a. Meeting Purpose
It is important everyone is informed on the purpose or objective of the meeting. State in one or two sentences the desired outcome. Make this expectation clear at the beginning of the meeting, and perhaps to key stakeholders a few days before the meeting.

Public Meeting Purposes
- Meet the requirements of public hearing regulation "x"
- Present our plans for ...
- Hear concerns/comments/collect feedback from the community about x, y, z
- Inform or update the public of the status of a, b, c
- Demonstrate that we are...
- Explain the status of...
- Correct information about...
- Continue the monthly meetings of the Restoration Advisory Board whose purpose is...

b. Meeting Structure
In general, meeting structure can be an open town hall meeting, an information station meeting, or combinations of both. For example, an information station meeting can be followed by an open house or vice versa.

There has been a trend through parts of DOD to move towards the information station meeting, but a decision for which type of meeting should be predicated on your meeting's purpose, what you hear from stakeholders (including community culture), as well as your resource availability.

The major advantage for the open town hall meeting is it requires less logistical planning and communicator skills training because there are fewer communicators. However, it is more vulnerable to activists attempting to disrupt the meeting, and limits the amount of information and participation available for the public stakeholder, as opposed to the information station meeting. If you anticipate a contentious meeting, the information station meeting is preferred.

The advantages of the information station meetings are crowd control, more one-on-one attention for the attendees and time flexibility for the attendees. The information can be provided on posters, handouts, sample equipment, videos, take home materials, copies of studies, reference materials, etc. Also, your Subject Matter Experts at each station can conduct mini presentations for groups as well as conduct one-on-one discussions. Another advantage is the potential use of third party supporter organizations. They can have their own information stations. An information station meeting can also have greeters who can quickly determine the information needs of people when they arrive and guide them to the appropriate station.

The disadvantage of information station meetings is the amount of information/materials required, as well as trained communicators required. Each information station needs subject matter experts who can explain their material and respond to questions. In some instances, this may take more than one expert per station.

c. Detailed Planning Checklist
The vast majority of the work done for a successful meetings is done before the meeting. When meetings fail, it is usually because of lack of planning, particularly detailed planning. Outlined below is one example of a

meeting planning checklist. This checklist is just one example to consider. Each meeting will have certain parts of a checklist that are more important than others.

Meeting Strategy
- ☐ What is the purpose of your meeting?
- ☐ What should the meeting outcome be? State the outcome in one or two sentences.

Meeting Details
- ☐ Does everyone on your team know the purpose/outcome?
- ☐ How do you plan to inform the attendees of the meeting outcome before and at beginning of meeting?
- ☐ How do you plan to get input from key stakeholders about the meeting purpose, your ideas on how the meeting will be conducted and any intelligence on who is coming?
- ☐ Do you know who you want to invite/encourage to attend?
- ☐ Do you know the size of the group?
- ☐ Can you handle an unexpected overflow?
- ☐ Who will show up?
  - Activists. What do you know about their agendas?
  - Family members.
  - Employees or unions.
  - Contractors.
  - Media.
  - Disruptive individuals or groups.
  - Regulators.
  - Government officials.
  - Realtors.
  - Health community.
  - Education community.
  - Cultural groups.
  - Anti-poverty community.
  - Religious community.
  - Charitable community.
  - Business community.
  - Professional/technical community.
  - Civic groups.
  - Emergency responders.
  - Senior citizens.
- ☐ Are you advertising the meeting, including information about the meeting purpose, how it will be conducted and how to contact for more information?
- ☐ What channels, vehicles and applications will you use for your messages/materials, as well as advertising? (See Section 7.)
- ☐ Are you informing union officials about the meeting?
- ☐ Will you send out information before the meeting?
  - Maps.
  - Starting and ending time.
  - Meeting purpose/outcome.
  - Meeting agenda.
  - Meeting process.
  - How the meeting will be conducted.
- ☐ How will you handle greeting and escorting?
  - Available parking.
  - Greeters at door.
  - Welcome sheets.
  - Escorts to meeting room.
  - Bilingual escorts.
  - Sign in sheet. If so, do you explain why you have a sign in sheet?
  - Reference packages.
  - Comment cards/forms.
- ☐ Have you considered comfort/facilities?
  - Transportation/parking.
  - Fire/emergency exits.
  - Smoking rules.
  - Food.
  - Avoid standing room.
  - Baby sitters.
  - Special needs people have, i.e., hearing impaired, elderly, disabled.
  - Chair comfort.
  - Clock they can see.
  - Lighting.
  - Angle to center stage from front corners where attendees will be sitting.
- ☐ Have you planned audience facilitation?
  - Microphones in audience.
  - Handouts before, during or after meeting.
  - Discussion/comment cards with pencils.
  - Follow up info cards.
  - Other languages; translators.
  - Special needs (hearing, sight, physical, baby-sitting)?
- ☐ Have you considered the impact of nonverbals on the meeting attendees?
  - Style of dress.
  - Barriers, such as podiums, tables or elevated platforms.
  - Seating plan.
  - If a town hall arrangement, will all presenters face the audience throughout the meeting.
  - Slides versus overheads versus easel. How high tech should it be for these stakeholders?
- ☐ Have you considered the type of presentation?
  - Informal/formal.
  - Questions/comments during or after meeting.

- Any open ended sessions – limited time or fairly open at the end of the meeting.

☐ Who will be there as third party support for you?
- What is their role in the meeting: active or inactive? If active, what is their role specifically?
- Where will they be?
- Will you introduce them?
- Are they respected in the community and not seen as being “in your pocket”?

☐ Will you have a “gatekeeper” for all questions and statements?

☐ Do you need a moderator or a facilitator? See sections below on Moderators and Facilitators.

☐ Will a security plan be needed?

☐ Have you anticipated generic types of questions?

☐ How will you handle disruptions in the audience? (See Principle 2.)
- Types of distractions to ignore: e.g., reading a newspaper.
- Type of distractions to address, e.g., two people having a discussion that can be heard throughout the room.
- Decide how to positively intervene.
- Decide who will intervene.
- Decide what to do if the majority of the audience takes over the meeting: stop them, allow it to happen or adjourn the meeting.

☐ Have you prepared for worst case questions/statements? (See Principle 2.)
- Possible responses.
- Rehearsed/role-played responses (use camcorder).
- Communicators trained in handling rudeness, anger, etc?
- Subject matter experts.

☐ Have you considered using the following to determine types of questions ahead of time?
- Any data/information available to you.
- Surveys.
- Prior media coverage. (media content analysis)
- Discussions with influential citizens of stakeholder groups.
- Advisory panels input.
- Hotline data.
- Employees input.
- Key stakeholder input.

Formal Sessions, e.g. Hearings

For hearings where the purpose is to just receive public comments:

☐ Will simple factual questions be asked, such as,“Are there any more of these meetings?” “When will (some milestone) start?”

☐ How long will one person talk?

☐ Will there be more than one question/point per person?

☐ Will there be microphones or not and its location?

☐ How much total meeting time will be allowed?

☐ Will there be a recorder?

Public Meeting Structure or Options/Rooms Setup

☐ For open town hall group meetings will there be:
- Podium?
- Stages for presenters if it’s in a very large room likely to be filled with stakeholders?

☐ How will you start? (town hall arrangement)

☐ Is your opening positive and clear? (town hall arrangement)
- Inform the attendees the public meeting is their meeting/agenda.
- State “In response to your concerns about...” and not “We’re hear to tell you about ...”.
- No more than three key messages.

☐ Do your key messages have the following characteristics?
- Key messages stated at beginning and end of a town hall meeting.
- No more than three or four key messages.
- Brief - 15 words or less.
- Include plan if you are interrupted during your opening statement.

☐ Do all of your team members have roles?
- Up front.
- Roving greeters.
- Someone in charge. Clarify specifics between command versus a facilitator, if present.
- Media location.
- Displays in front, back or in an anteroom or combination of above.
- Note taker.

After the Meeting (Town Hall and Information Station Meetings)

☐ What material will be available for them to take home?

☐ Will you be available after the meeting? If so, tell them this at the beginning and end of meeting.

☐ Will you set dates for follow up meetings?

☐ Will you be able to address additional information requests?

☐ Will your group critique the meeting? If so when: immediately or next workday?

☐ What will you do with the follow-up requests?

☐ Do you have a who, what, when for each follow-up request?

☐ How will you distribute meeting minutes?

Moderators

☐ Moderator has the following attributes:
- Local.
- Neutral.
- Respected

☐ Duties of the moderator for public meetings can include:
- Keeping order in the meeting.
- Reviewing agenda with set time schedule.
  - Introductions.
  - Opening presentation.
  - Open discussion/comments.
  - Adjournment.
- Establishing ground rules for open discussion.
  - Alternates between oral and written.
  - Allows one question/comment per person until everyone has had an opportunity to speak or
  - Sets time limit for both questions/comments and answers.

Facilitators

☐ Facilitator has the following attributes:
- Local.
- Neutral.
- Respected.

☐ Locating Facilitators
- *Consensus* is a newsletter of The Harvard Law School Project on Negotiation has ads for mediation organizations, which can identify facilitators.
- Alternative dispute resolution centers.
- Colleges and universities.
- Individuals in these fields have excellent facilitation skills:
  - Psychology
  - Organizational Development
  - Public Relations
  - Clergy
- League of Women Voters has trained discussion leaders.
- Look at *references* more than academic credentials.

☐ Pre-meeting duties of the facilitator can include:
- Assisting on how the agenda is set.
- Assuring all parties agree with agenda.
- Assuring sufficient time provided for agenda input.
- Assuring attendance.
- Locating an agreed upon facility for the public meeting.
- Recording – who, circulation, final issuance by when. (Facilitator can take role of recorder.)
- Attending to other individuals' desires (hardware, smoking, etc).
- Taking the actual role of agenda coordinator.

☐ During-meeting duties of the facilitator can include:
- Checking comfort level at start during a check in.
- Assuring the agenda is clear.
- Focusing energy of group on the task for the meeting.
- Checking participation levels; encourages non-participants.
- Suggesting alternative procedures when group is bogged down.
- Testing to assure that people are listening.
  - Paraphrasing
  - Drifting off
  - Nonverbals
  - "Yeah buts"
  - Changing subjects
- Controlling interruptions or talk overs.
- Controlling changing subjects before an issue is fully discussed.
- Controlling negativity.
- Controlling use of word "I" versus "You," "They", "Don't you think".
- Controlling defensiveness.
- Controlling teaming up against others.
- Testing if decisions reached were understood by all by repeating it.
- Managing deadlocks.
- At end of meeting, assuring follow-ups are understood and agreed by all.
- Assuring the recorder has time and understanding. ("Read that back please")

☐ After-meeting duties can include:
- Conducting individual discussions. ("How's it going?")
- Testing for avoidance. (If these individual discussions indicate problems that haven't surfaced in the meetings, then work "one-on-one" on the importance of not avoiding issues.)
- Clarifying follow-ups.
- Approving meeting notes before issuance.

D: Communicator Skills Training. (See Section 5.)

PRINCIPLE 9

Evaluate your meeting results.

There are formal methods of evaluating meetings briefly noted below. You usually don't need these formal approaches, but you do need to informally discuss how the meeting went: "Did we accomplish the meeting purpose and if not, why not?" "What was agreed to (action steps) and are there plans for any subsequent meetings?"

This informal approach of evaluation takes little time, but doesn't always get done. One reason may be everyone is usually on to another meeting, task or event once a meeting has concluded. "There just isn't time. I've got to…" The time should be taken; make it a part of your meeting agenda. "After the rest of the attendees have left, we'll take 10 minutes to review…" If you can't take these 10 minutes, then make a commitment to phone later that day or the next to summarize.

Not having informal "How did it go and what are the next steps?" brief discussions can lead to disparate action plans/actions by meeting attendees, dropped balls on items agreed to in the meeting and more confusion for the next meeting.

Formal Approaches

Two formal evaluation approaches, *process evaluation* and *outcome evaluation,* can be applied to your meetings. These are more often applied to evaluations of strategic plans, major project plans, etc. Section 10 – Communications Issues Planning covers applying these two formal evaluation approaches to risk communication plans. These same techniques would apply to a meeting evaluation process.

In summary, detailed planning is the key to having successful meetings.

SECTION 10: Communication Issues Planning

A Plan

All of us live in a planning environment. When we first wake up on a workday morning, we instinctively have a plan as to what needs to be done from the time we wake up to when we get to work, at say 8:00am. The plan isn't written down, doesn't have a template with various steps, but it is a plan nonetheless. In this case, your mission is to get to work by 8:00am. Your plan has stakeholders who can help or hinder your mission. The stakeholders could be your children, spouse, roommate, radio traffic updates, day care center, someone you have to talk to on the phone before you leave the house, entrance security check points where you work, etc. Finally, you have a feedback loop called evaluation. You may need to change your plan if you're getting to work late.

Discussing and reviewing what you do from the time you get out of bed to when you arrive at work in terms of planning with a mission, stakeholders, corrective action, etc. isn't necessary. However, discussing and reviewing is applicable to planning in the job environment, whether it's a strategic plan for a large agency or a risk communication issues plan.

Organizational Strategic Plan Versus Communication Issues Plan

A large organization's strategic plan can include elements such as competitive analysis, a future environment analysis (political, social, technological), or a long term projection as to where the organization will be in ten years. These elements are not necessary in your risk communication issues planning, but you and your fellow communicators do need a plan.

The two key activities of effective risk communication issues planning are: 1) stakeholder involvement/input and 2) communicator skills training.

A communication issues plan has several benefits for you and your organization. It aligns your team/fellow risk communicators, allows you to measure progress and make necessary adjustments to the plan. It also involves stakeholders, including third party supporters and provides a system to adjust to change.

A communication issues plan should have a template (components); however, *no one template is the right template*. Your communication issues plan template should have these basic components:

- *Background* or *situational analysis.* What do we know now?
- *Purpose/mission.* What are we trying to accomplish?
- *Stakeholder identification and prioritization.*Who is involved in accomplishing our mission? Who impacts our mission favorably or unfavorably?
- *Action steps.* What (who, what and when) is necessary to accomplish the mission?
- *Evaluation.* How is this plan working? Evaluate from time to time – usually an informal approach will work.

There are other template components you can add:

- *Goals* to accomplish the mission.
- *Message development.* This can be a separate component or part of your action steps.
- *General approach to accomplish your action steps*, e.g., parallel efforts or checkpoints before proceeding to next steps, or necessary review procedures, etc.

Nature of a Communication Issues Plan

A communication issues plan is a very flexible and iterative process because risk communication is a social science involving ever changing environments, new stakeholders, situations and regulations, elimination and creation of challenges. As a result, *your plan is dynamic and evolving.* The plan is not linear. You don't complete step 1, then start step 2, complete step 2 and start step 3. For example, you may want to change your mission statement after you gather more intelligence from stakeholders. Your stakeholders may change from time to time and your messages may change as the issue becomes more or less important or as new stakeholders become involved in the issue.

Two Key Activities

The two key activities of effective risk communication issues planning are: *stakeholder involvement/input* and *communicator skills training*. (Communicator Skills Training is covered in Sections 5, 6, 7, and 8.)

Regarding stakeholder involvement/input, it is important to *identify and prioritize* stakeholders who impact your mission, favorably or unfavorably, as well as those we refer to as "straddlers," (those in the middle). (See Section 4A.) Your straddler and supportive stakeholders frequently have good ideas to help you regarding your

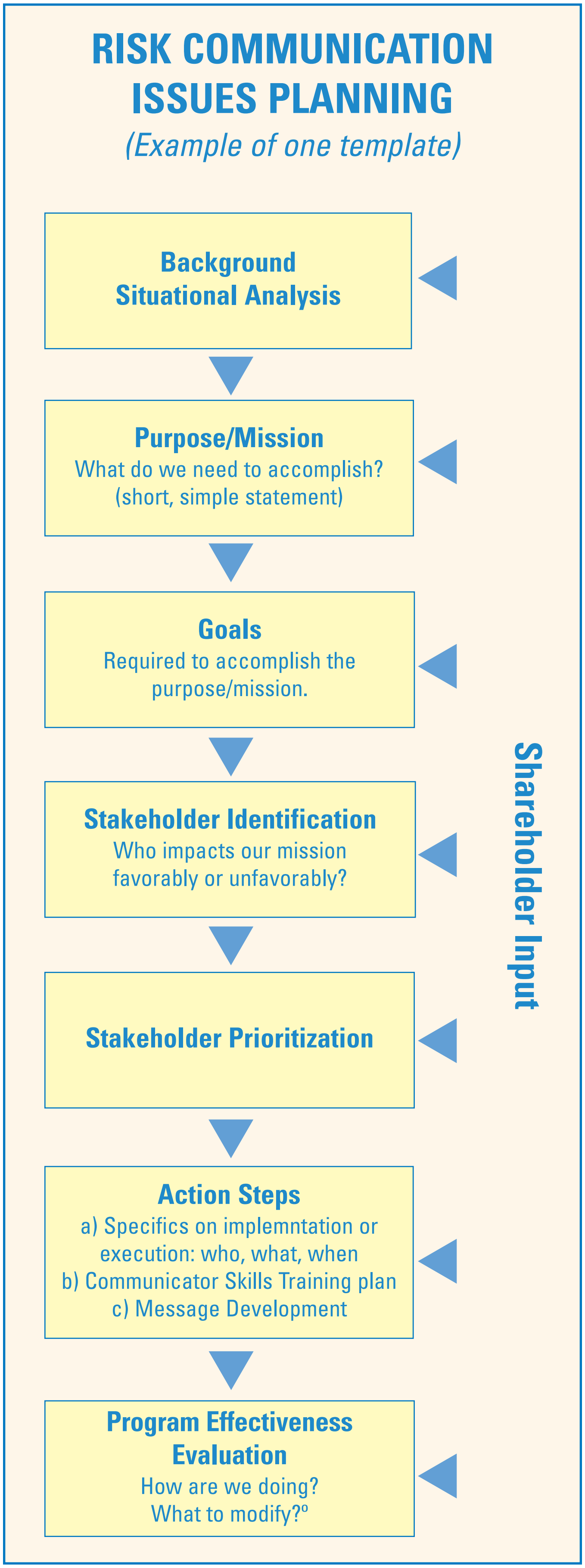

Fig. 4

communication plan components. These good ideas can include internal stakeholders who are in the lower ranks of your organization.

How you respond to stakeholders who oppose you (splenetics) influences how you are viewed by straddlers. Your action plan with splenetics should be based on the impact on your straddler stakeholders. If straddlers observe you are being fair to splenetics (providing information), they may move more toward supporting you; move from straddlers to supporters. Finally, include an analysis of stakeholder culture and how it impacts your action steps. (See Section 8.)

Identifying and prioritizing stakeholders can be done formally (various types of surveys) or informally – meetings or one-on-one conversations. The informal approach is usually sufficient, and there are many successful risk communication plans using these informal approaches. The best way to identify external stakeholders who impact your mission is to ask the ones you already know: "Who else should we talk to or invite, etc?" "Are there other groups or individuals that have concerns about…?" "Are there some respected and influential individuals we should know? If so, how do you suggest we contact them?"

Stakeholder prioritization should not be a "1, 2, 3, 4…" listing. Groupings, such as *most important, important, or less important,* should suffice. Also, this prioritization should be done quickly because it could change once you start contacting stakeholders. For example, you may learn from stakeholders about other stakeholders you didn't know about, or you may find that a stakeholder you thought was high priority has no interest in the issue.

Communication Issues Planning Template

Figure 4 is one template for communication issues planning. Note the arrows reflect obtaining input/ideas from selected stakeholders on each step. It can be thought of as gathering intelligence.

1. Background

Gather what you know right now.

2. Purpose/Mission Statement

- Your mission statement is why you have a risk communication program.
- It should be a very broad statement describing what you are trying to accomplish.
- It should be brief, understandable and clear to your risk communication team and key stakeholders.

- Example: Build trust with community stakeholders who impact your mission – supporters and straddlers.
- Example: Increase awareness and change behavior regarding tobacco cessation.

3. Goals Required to Accomplish the Purpose/Mission (An optional template step)
- Goals are the major approaches to accomplish your purpose/mission.
- Goals are broad statements.
- Two to four goals are sufficient.
- Example: If the mission is to build trust with stakeholders, the goals could be to gather intellegience about:
  a. Stakeholder concerns.
  b. Stakeholder interests
  c. What stakeholders know/don't know about us.

4. Stakeholder Identification and Prioritization
Identify both internal and external stakeholders. Finding out their diverse and sometimes competing interests, concerns and agendas is a key step to any risk communication effort. Look at the example of the three goals above (3a, 3b, 3c). The easiest way to determine stakeholders' interests and concerns is to ask them and third party supporters in interviews (formal or informal) with key leaders (inside and outside) in your organization. Then, use this information to develop your risk communication action steps. For a large external risk communication issue, there can be people in the public who you may not know as stakeholders. The only way to ensure you don't exclude a key group or individual is to ask for recommendations of additional stakeholders. Finally, consider who might need a third party supporter. See Section 4C for definitions of a third party supporter.

For a generic list of stakeholders, see Appendix III. This checklist can be helpful to avoid overlooking stakeholders who may impact your mission.

5. Stakeholder Prioritization
Ask/test these points:
- Who impacts your mission both favorably and unfavorably?
- Whom do you want to reach?
- Who are the key decision leaders/makers?
- Who can be effective third party supporters?

6. Action Steps
The action steps should be written in quantifiable language. You will be able to measure/determine whether the action step was accomplished. Include a "who, what and when."

7. Program Effectivenss Evaluation – "How are we doing?"
The evaluation process is required to ensure you are achieving your purpose/mission and action steps. This should be updated during the risk communication process as needed.

Types of Evaluation
A communication issues plan can be informally or formally evaluated. The *informal approach* may suffice and can have occasional sessions to review progress (achieving milestones, corrective actions needed, surprises so far, etc.).

There are two basic types of formal evaluation: *process evaluation* and *outcome evaluation*.

Process evaluation is used to track how well communication activities are working and examines the procedures and tasks involved. Process evaluation can also assess administrative and organizational aspects of community outreach activities. For example, if you invite the community to call the installation for more information, you should provide a mechanism (a simple response form) used by the person asnwering the phone to record questions asked and answers given. Reviews of these responses will reveal whether correct or inadequate information is being given, new information is needed to respond adequately, and if there is a pattern to the questions.

Process Evaluation Measures
To avoid communication problems, establish a process evaluation mechanism to track progress.

Examples of things you should consider tracking:
- Time schedules, expenditures and work performed.
- Inquiries from the community.
- Participation in outreach activities.
- Function and quality of response systems.
- Interim changes in audience awareness, knowledge, attitudes or actions.

Some ways of tracking include:
- Clipping services of print media coverage.
- Follow-up phone calls to people who have requested material or have participated in installation outreach activities.
- Monitoring the volume of inquiries.
- Reviewing telephone responses for accuracy and appropriateness.

- Checking distribution points to assess communication materials used and make sure the materials are still available.
- Phone calls or meetings with representatives from other installations to review progress and problems.
- Focus groups or telephone interviews with members of the community or target audiences.

Outcome Evaluations

Outcome evaluation is used to measure program effectiveness and demonstrates you have accomplished your communication objectives. This goes beyond process evaluation by providing information about the *value* of your communication activities (whether the target audience learned, acted, or made a change as a result of your activities). That is not information about quantity of your activities (the number of people who attended your open house or who received your newsletter). Outcome evaluation involves some form of before and after comparisons, e.g., a comparison of target audience awareness or attitudes before and after one or more communications activities. Outcome evaluation measures can be observational (content analysis of media coverage) or self-reported (interviews with the target audience).

Effective outcome evaluation obstacles are limited funds, limited staff time and capabilities, limited time for communication activity, restrictions on hiring consultants or contractors and difficulties in designing appropriate measures of effectiveness.

Despite these constraints, there are practical benefits to including evaluation as part of your work. This includes determining if your communication program is on track and how well it worked. No matter the size of your budget, you can find a way to include some form of outcome evaluation in your program. For example, if you have a small budget, conduct a print media interview (monitoring of content articles about your installation appearing in newspapers). If you have a larger budget, a before-and-after community survey (telephone survey of attitudes of stakeholders in the local community) can be invaluable in judging the success of the program.

In summary, Risk Communication Planning requires stakeholder involvement and communicator skills training.