Narrative and Everyday Life

- Everyday life is shaped by narratives
- Underlie our thinking of the world and problems that we encounter
- When the status quo is disrupted:
  - Transformation
  - Trouble resolved; status quo restored
- Thinking about trouble moments and strategic actions to take
What is a Crisis?

- Charlie Sheen, BP oil spill, Firestone recall
- Media coverage
- "Out of control" feeling
- Protagonists and antagonists

Eight Rules of Crisis Management
Rule 1: The Big and Small Pictures

- Information restores sense of control
- Collect different points of view from within your organization
- Sense of control leads to better decisions and greater confidence
- Improved perception

Rule 2: Act Quickly

- “Rapid response”
- But act with INTELLIGENCE, too
Rule 3: Be Honest

- When attacked, you will be cast as the villain
- Victims are identified by attacker
- Two narratives develop: yours and your attacker’s – know the roles you play in both
- Honesty and transparency is key
  - In attacker’s story – undermines characterization of you as a villain
  - In your story – you get to embody the hero

Rule 4: Evaluate Your Progress

- Accurate feedback, both positive and negative
- Keep up with the story you are involved in
- Understand new developments
- Adjust your decisions and responses based on habits of media and attackers
Rule 5: Assemble the Right Team

- “War room”
- Assemble those who can focus on the crisis
- Communications, directors and executive directors
- Keep it small
- Assemble and train before a crisis hits

Rule 6: Respond with Appropriate Media Venue

- Use same mediums as attacker
- Be flexible – use both bigger and smaller mediums for different purposes
- Use social media to both respond and monitor
- Don’t show anger or resentment
Rule 7: Make Sure the Fire is Out

- Answer all allegations on record
- Venue choice is important
- Reframe the story to be a hero
- Protect against the same allegation with a “new angle”

Rule 8: Know When Change is Necessary

- Most important rule
- Maintain status quo or transformation?
- Sometimes attackers identify real problems
- Acknowledge needed change if appropriate:
  - Disarm the attackers
  - Win confidence of the public
  - Bring story to a close
Recap

1. Get the big and small pictures
2. Act quickly
3. Be honest
4. Evaluate your progress
5. Assemble the right team
6. Respond to appropriate media venue
7. Make sure the fire is out
8. Know when change is necessary
Elements of a Crisis Communications Plan

- Crisis management team
- Company information packet
- Communication items
- Opinion leader outreach

Crisis Management Team

- This team identifies what actions should be taken
- Team should be individuals who are key to the situation
  - Contact information for key officers, spokespeople and crisis management team members
  - Designate a spokesperson
Company Information Packet

• Fact sheets on the organization, each group, each physical location and each service offered
• Profiles and biographies for each key officer of the company

Communications Items

• Internal talking points
• Media talking points
• Press releases
• Opinion editorials
• Pre-written scripts answering key questions developed through crisis scenario analysis
• Contact information for each key media contact – locally, nationally and key financial press and analysts
Opinion Leader Outreach

- Prioritized list of opinion leaders
- Contact information target list
- Develop appropriate materials, e.g. email and/or letter

Thank You