

RSOG Seminar : Strengthening Crisis Communication

with

Ethan Becker
President
The Speech Improvement Company INC

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Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : Ethan Becker

About The Seminar

When a major incident happens, the manner for which an organization responds can have a significant impact on its public reputation. The ability to communicate in a clear, calm, and confident manner during a time of crisis is critical for senior leaders in public service. When leaders are able to effectively communicate information to the public and the media, they are able to minimize negative feedback or press and most importantly, gain public confidence on the reputation of the organisation. “Strengthening Crisis Communication” is a half-day seminar by Ethan Becker that exposes participants with the fundamentals of effective communication in ensuring that the intended message during crisis gets through to the public in a desired manner.

Summary

In Rhetoric, Aristotle shared: “Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself.”

The first kind refers to Ethos (disposition or character – who you are and how you come across), the second – Pathos (persuasion through means of emotions such as excitement, fear, hope – seen as the most powerful aspect of communication), and the third, Logos (argument or discourse – persuasion through the means of logic). These

three modes of persuasion are seen as crucial to organisation communication as shared by Ethan Becker, President of the Speech Improvement Company at the Razak School of Government's Seminar on Strengthening Crisis Communication.

In front of an audience that consists of civil servants, members of the academia and private sector representatives, he stressed on how one's personal, professional and organisational ethos will be tested during crisis management and how it is managed will define what message gets across. Our attitude on things affect how and what we communicate and it then becomes communication. In short, the way one thinks inadvertently becomes the way one looks, sounds and communicates. Therefore, the fundamentals of effective crisis communication is to know what one's ethos is, ensure it is consistently demonstrated, and as such, it will be prevalent even in times of crisis.

The nature of communication is that the message is intended for the receiver by the sender, therefore relationships are a crucial element in it. Quality of relationships affect how things are conveyed, communicated and inferred. The relationship between communication and trust are interactive as effective communication is a necessary precursor to trust. The trust built therefore reinforces positive communication and strengthens the quality of relationships.

In crisis communication, the consistent message that should be communicated is safety, predictability, and control. There will be certain triggers – or hooks, that may switch one from a professional attitude to a personal attitude in responding during times of crisis. Personal attitude often have the emotive or affect involved and as such, could impact on the notion of safety, predictability, and control. In addition to that, in any good crisis plan, it should consist of one key individual facing the mass media. This reflects one voice conveying the consistent message. However, this does not prevent opportunities for relevant experts and key individuals to be involved during crisis.

The speaker ended the session by stressing, "Effective communication should always be practised so when you are faced with crisis communication, conveying the intended message comes naturally."

Issues Raised :

- The key idea of communication is that "it is not about you." The message is always for the listener/receiver because the sender (you) already know the message.
- Crisis communication goes beyond ticking the checklist of what to do and what not to do. It is about relationships, gaining trust and acceptance. As such, it is

encouraged that one invests in stakeholder management – one that is effective and meaningful for parties involved.

- In normal setting, communication is already challenging. In times of crisis, the challenge is magnified. Effective communication should always be practiced, especially in ensuring the intended message gets across the audience. Therefore when one is faced with crisis communication, conveying message comes naturally.
- Beware of hooks or triggers as it may hamper efforts in conveying the intended message during crisis.

About The Speaker

Ethan Becker is speech coach and trainer with The Speech Improvement Company, INC. He is co-author of the bestselling book “Mastering Communication at Work: How to Lead, Manage and Influence”, and holds two degrees in communication and honorary doctorate from Fitchburg State University. He has taught at Ivy League schools including Harvard University, Northeastern University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has worked in organisations from across industries in Malaysia while at ICLIF Leadership and Governance Center, including the public sector and government-linked organisations.

Topics of expertise range from the mechanics of speaking to the psychology of communication. He has developed and delivered customized motivational training programmes in addition to serving as trusted advisor and coach to clients around the world.

Reading Materials

<http://www.speechimprovement.com/crisis/>

Photo Gallery

Contact

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