

COMMUNICATING CONFIDENTLY IN A CRISIS

**Association of School Business Officials
International**



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Presented by:

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About Your Presenter:

Candace K. BelAir is an Emmy Award-winning reporter and producer, formerly with CNN, Newsweek, United Stations Radio Network, and KIRO-TV (Seattle CBS affiliate). During her 12 years as a Broadcast Journalist, Candace conducted thousands of interviews... from the "man on the street" to President George Bush.

Today, as President of BelAir Training, Candace teaches her clients how to succeed in high stakes interviews and appearances of all kinds: whether facing a crowd of reporters or reporting to shareholders and Boards of Directors; dealing with irate customers or handling difficult personalities in the workplace; addressing angry citizens at a public hearing or motivating cross-functional teams in an organization; pitching to new prospects or networking at a business event. In each case, Candace shows her clients how to speak with confidence, authenticity, and *impact*.

Candace has earned the highly-competitive designation of Professional Speaker from the National Speakers Association (NSA), and is Immediate Past Chair of the Mentoring Program of NSA Northwest. She speaks at business conferences and association meetings across the country, most often on ***"High Impact! Presentation Skills;" "How to Stay Cool on the Hot Seat;" "Successful Networking;"*** and ***"Communicating As a Leader."***

Her clients include **Microsoft, Amazon, Aol., Starbucks, Nintendo, REI, Washington State Patrol, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys,** and the **Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**. For a complete client listing, testimonials, and additional information, visit www.BelAirTraining.com

HANDLING THE MEDIA DURING A CRISIS

☒ THE INTERNET HAS CREATED "CITIZEN JOURNALISTS"

- Social Media is **IMMEDIATE!**

☒ WHY YOU SHOULD MEET WITH THE MEDIA:

- You can be proactive, rather than reactive
- You have a better chance of controlling the message
- You have a 100% greater chance of correcting misinformation
- Refusing to talk with reporters looks as if you are not in control, or that you are hiding from them

☒ KNOW YOUR KEY MESSAGES:

- Concise
- Free of jargon
- WHAT DOES THIS MEAN to the audience? (WIIFM?)

How to Stay on Message:

☒ "HOOK" YOUR KEY MESSAGES:

" There are three things you need to know. Number one..."

" My answer is going to surprise you..."

" We've done something no one else has..."

☒ "FLAG" YOUR KEY MESSAGES:

*" **What's important here** is that..."*

*" The **key point** I'd like to make is..."*

*" If there's **one thing** that matters most, it's..."*

*" The **bottom line** is..."*

☒ **"BRIDGE" TO YOUR KEY MESSAGES:**

" I can see why you'd think that; however, the real issue here is..."

" That's one point of view; here's another way to look at it..."

" That's an interesting observation; what you also want to remember is..."

" We've heard that before; we prefer to look at it this way..."

☒ **LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE QUESTION!**

☒ **IF YOU WANT TO BE QUOTED...**

- Express emotions
- Give comparisons

☒ **OFF THE RECORD**

☒ **"NO COMMENT"**

☒ **IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER...**

" I don't know the answer; I'll find out and get back to you."

Then BRIDGE to: *" What I **CAN** tell you is..."*

*" Because that's not my area of expertise, I don't want to say anything that might be misinformed." **Then BRIDGE to:** " What I **DO** know is..."*

" Since I don't have all the facts, I'm unable to answer your question."

Then BRIDGE to: *"What I **AM** sure of is..."*

HOW TO MAINTAIN CONTROL OF THE SITUATION:

- ☒ **REMAIN CALM AND STICK TO THE FACTS**
- ☒ **BEWARE OF "WHAT IF?" QUESTIONS**
- ☒ **IF YOU ARE INTERRUPTED...**
- ☒ **IF THE QUESTIONER MAKES A FALSE STATEMENT...**
- ☒ **IF YOU AREN'T FAMILIAR WITH THE "FACTS" PRESENTED...**
- ☒ **IF A QUESTION CONTAINS NEGATIVE LANGUAGE,
DO NOT REPEAT IT...**
- ☒ **IF YOU EXPERIENCE THE "PREGNANT PAUSE"...**
- ☒ **STOP TALKING!**
- ☒ **YOU ARE ALWAYS "ON"**

HOW YOU RESPOND TO A CRISIS IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE CRISIS ITSELF

Be visible. Be sympathetic. Be responsive.

☒ **IF YOU MADE A MISTAKE, ADMIT IT**

☒ **SHOW CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF THOSE AFFECTED**

"We have evacuated the area and everyone is safe and accounted for."

"Firefighters responded quickly; everyone exited the building safely."

☒ **DEMONSTRATE THAT YOU'VE TAKEN IMMEDIATE ACTION**

"We immediately relieved the staff member of his duties."

"We contacted the Health Department as soon as we realized that students were becoming ill."

☒ **EXPLAIN THAT YOU ARE COOPERATING WITH AUTHORITIES**

"We have provided samples to the Health Department for testing to determine the cause of the outbreak of the illness."

"We are turning over our records to the local police department to aid them in their investigation."

☒ **EXTEND SYMPATHY, SUPPORT, GRATITUDE AND RESOURCES**

"We have offered our full support to the teacher and her family during this difficult time."

"Our thoughts are with the injured students, and we are doing everything we can to help them and their families get through this."

"We appreciate how understanding our community has been ever since we closed our doors a few days ago."

Scenario # 1

A middle school student, the victim of ongoing bullying by four high school students, is physically attacked in his school's parking lot at dusk. He is found, unconscious, several hours later by a teacher who had been working late. He is rushed to the hospital, where he is in intensive care. The media are calling you to find out what happened.

- 1) Why did you let those four bullies continue to attack this young boy?
- 2) I understand these same boys are involved in another bullying attack at the middle school across town. What do you say to that?
- 3) These four bullies will be expelled, won't they?
- 4) What if the boy dies?
- 5) This incident happened in broad daylight. Why didn't anyone come to the boy's rescue?
- 6) We've heard the boy's parents intend to sue the school district.

Scenario # 2

You are the school business official in a district that is facing the biggest layoff it has ever seen. You need to close a \$ 25 million budget gap. Student class size, new textbooks, building maintenance, transportation, and extracurricular fees will all be affected. Employees' pay and health care premiums will likely be reduced. The really bad news: estimates show that more than 25 teachers will be laid off. At a special Board meeting, teachers and employees are enraged, and hurl tough questions at you.

- 1) Why isn't YOUR job on the line?
- 2) Since the district needs to close a \$20 million budget gap, how about cutting your own salary?
- 3) These cuts will result in an inferior educational experience for our students, won't they?
- 4) If you lay off 25 teachers, the rest of the teachers plan to strike, in a sympathy move. How will you cope with that?
- 5) What if we lose our winning track and basketball teams?
- 6) My wife is battling breast cancer; we have four kids; we live frugally. With a cut in pay and health care premiums, we're not going to make it. What am I supposed to tell my wife and kids?

Scenario # 3

A favorite teacher is shot and killed at an elementary school by a man who police say was "infatuated" with her. Witnesses say the teacher was shot during a verbal confrontation on school grounds at 7:30am, before students arrived for the day. A custodian ran out of the school screaming for someone to call the police. The suspect is still at large.

- 1) What are you doing to calm the students?
- 2) We understand the suspect is the victim's estranged husband.
- 3) The teacher is still in intensive care. What are her chances of surviving?
- 4) What if the suspect returns to the school and kills again?
- 5) When will school reopen?
- 6) You must be concerned that some parents will transfer their children out of this school, to a safer district.

Scenario # 4

A fire in a school building at night destroys a portion of the facility. You are called and immediately rush to the scene. Fortunately, no one was in the school at the time. The challenge is the immediate recovery to reopen, while keeping the lines of communication open. The long-term challenge is reconstruction.

- 1) What caused the fire, and what's the dollar amount in damage?
- 2) We understand a custodian was in the building and has not been accounted for.
- 3) When will the school reopen?
- 4) Since the entire building has been destroyed, where will you hold classes?
- 5) What if it's too expensive to reconstruct this building? Then what?
- 6) My source tells me a burning cigarette started this fire. Since smoking is banned in the building, how could this happen?

BODY LANGUAGE TIPS:

- ☒ **BE AWARE OF YOUR POSTURE**
- ☒ **MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT**
- ☒ **KEEP YOUR HANDS AND ARMS IN AN "OPEN" POSITION**
- ☒ **DRESS APPROPRIATELY**
- ☒ **MINIMIZE OUTWARD SIGNS OF "NERVOUS" ENERGY**

*** ON THE PHONE:**

- ☒ _____ **WHILE YOU TALK**
- ☒ _____ **WHILE YOU TALK**
- ☒ **KEEP YOUR HANDS FREE**

VOICE TIP:

- ☒ **WATCH THE "UM"s, "AH"s, YOU KNOW"s, ETC.**

SOME LAST WORDS FOR STAYING COOL IN THE "HOT SEAT"

- ☒ **AVOID THE TEMPTATION TO BE SARCASTIC**
- ☒ **GIVE YOURSELF SOME QUIET TIME BEFORE THE
INTERVIEW**
- ☒ **REVIEW YOUR KEY MESSAGES**
- ☒ **ACKNOWLEDGE THE QUESTIONER _____**
- ☒ **EXPECT THE "UNEXPECTED"**
- ☒ **BREATHE AND RELAX**



FINALLY, ALWAYS REMEMBER...

Every crisis is an opportunity for you to enhance your
reputation through behavior that _____
_____.