

Messaging and Connecting in the New Media Age

7 Lessons in Communicating with the Media & Public

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Oriented to Colleges and Universities for Both Routine and Crisis Communications

- Today's discussion focuses on the most probable, practical and actionable lessons for a College/University.
- Publically available video clips selected to highlight a "lesson to be learned" --- the topic, individual and positions are neither supported or opposed.
- Some videos have multiple lessons --- only focusing on the most significant one.
- Video clips and this presentation are intended to be respectful of individuals and institutions and non-partisan.

Oriented to Colleges and Universities for Both Routine and Crisis Communications (continued)

- Individuals are referred to by title at the time of the video.
- Hindsight is always perfect. Consider the video in the context of the moment --- appreciating the situation and pressure that the individual was in and under.
- Normal paradigms of communications within a class room, campus, academic environment and the scientific/research community don't apply to media and general public.
- None of the 7 lessons is intended as a way around facts, truth and institutional protocol for any issue or individual.

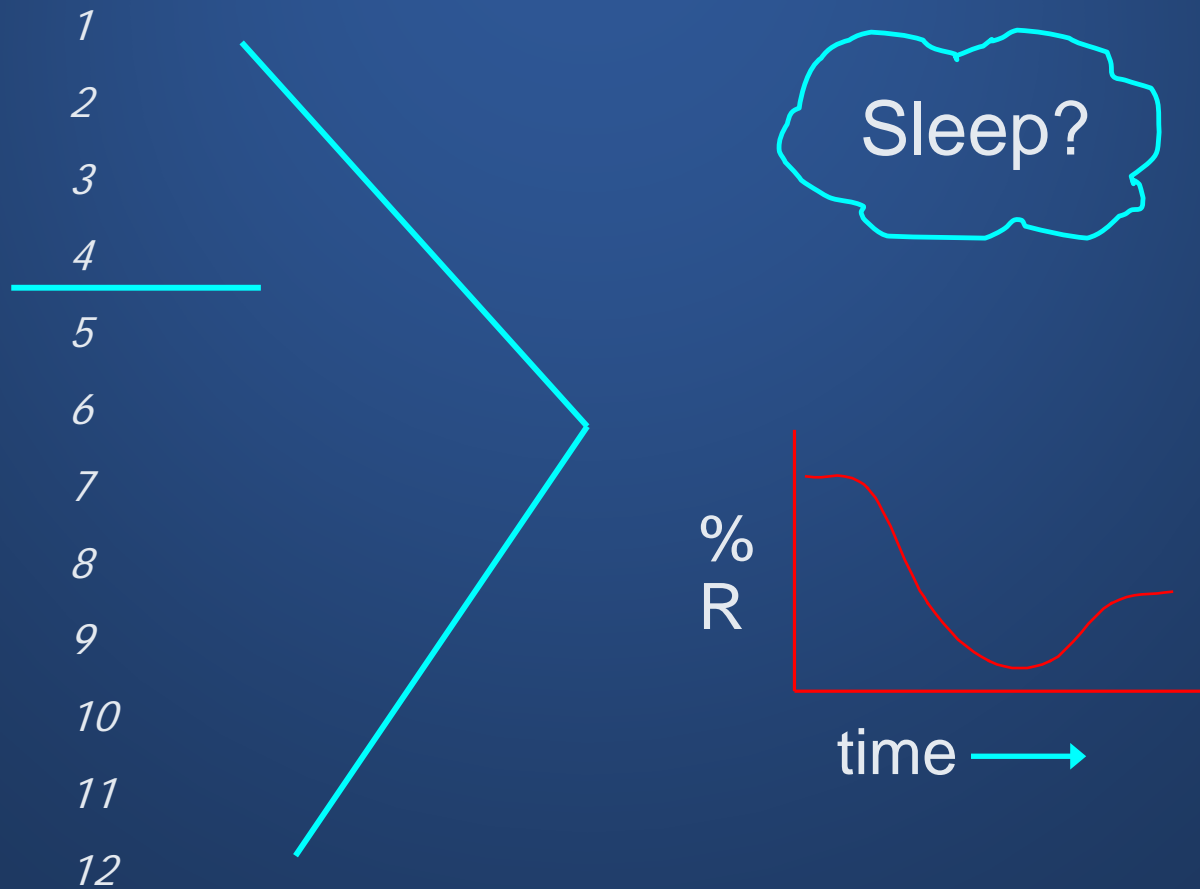
Seven Practical and Actionable Lessons in Communicating with the Media & Public

1. Effective messaging meets three criteria
2. Words and text matter
3. With messaging the best defense can a good offense
4. Delivery matters for messaging to be convincing
5. If you're not going to answer the question just say so
6. Interview interruptions are ill-advised
7. Apologizing is (apparently) never all that easy

1. Effective Messaging Meets Three Criteria

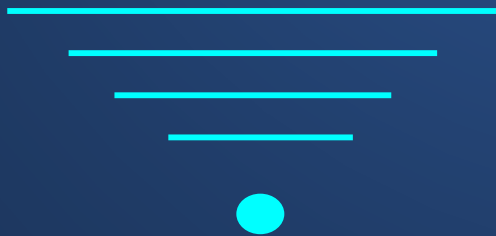
- **Pass thru the attention filter:** The speed and volume of data, information and messaging is overwhelming. The average adult is involuntary exposed to ~10,000 ads/messages a day. Our attention filters significantly restrict what we actually receive (see and hear).^A
- **Stay within retention capacity:** For messaging less is more. Initially, we can only correctly retain a small amount of involuntary information and messaging that is received.
- **Minimize the processing time:** The media generally doesn't have a lot of processing time to report the "news". The public on the other hand doesn't really want to spend a lot of time processing to form an opinion/make a decision.

The Word Test Highlights Several Important Aspects of Messaging

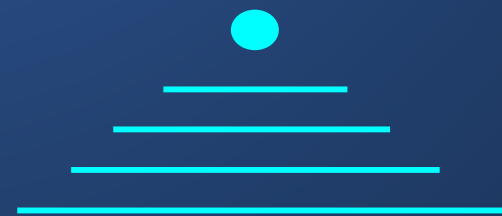


Educating Works in the Lecture Hall, While Advocating is Best in the TV Studio/Town Hall

Educating means
building a case w/
theories, derivations,
experiments ...
provoking ideas and
seeking truth.



Advocating means
the conclusion is
mentioned first, then
supported with facts,
theorems, etc.



2. Words Matter Individually and Collectively in Verbal & Written Communications

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Key words:

- More likely to pass through the attention filter and be retained.
- Frame an overarching theme or thought over a discussion or text.^B
- Serve as triggers in our minds --- to act, agree, disagree, etc.
- Make awkward or complex text/verbal remarks easier to process

Text:

- Drafted to an 8th grade level and >60 readability score (Flesch-Kincaid)
- Shorter sentences and paragraphs
- If its challenging to read a skeptical audience won't read it

Bush 2nd Inaugural Speech Pushed America, Freedom & Liberty to Support a Broader Theme



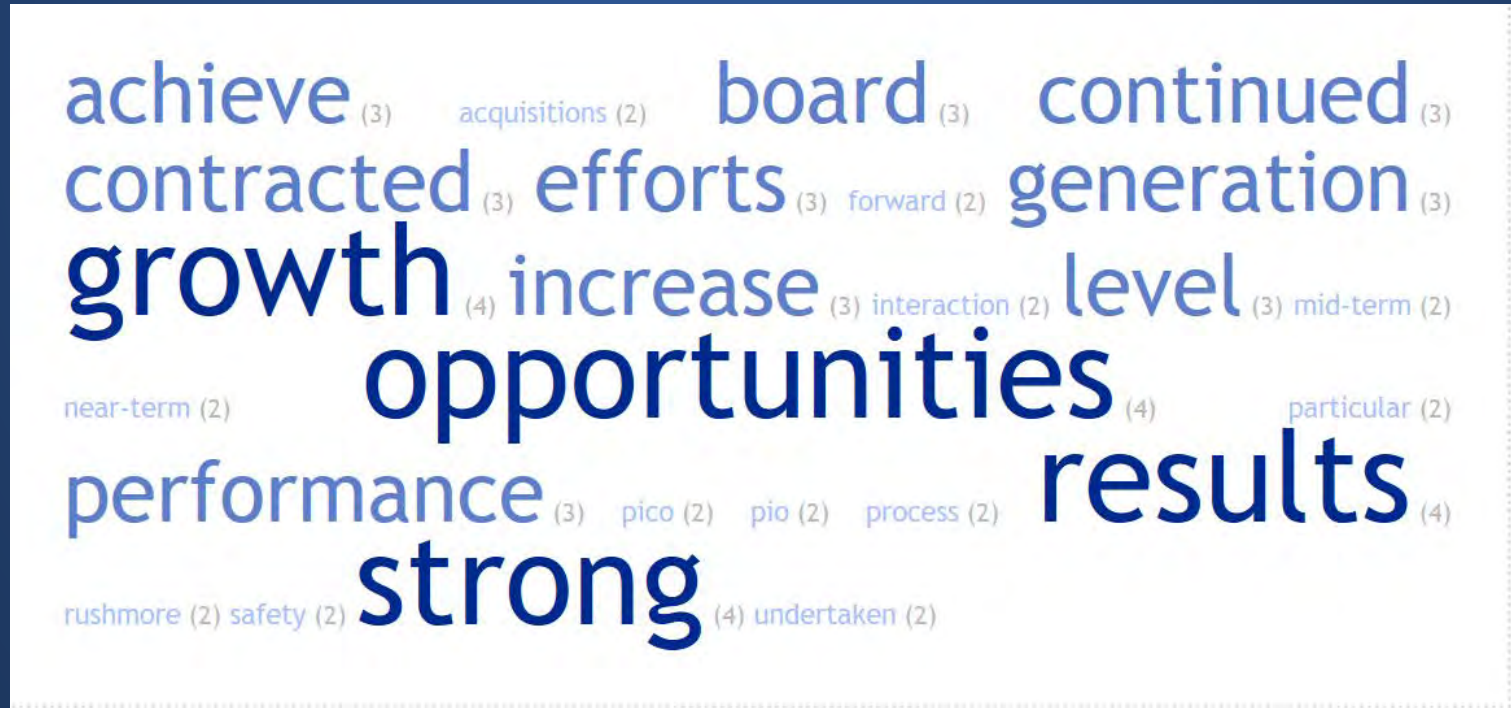
On *Face the Nation*, Majority Leader McCarthy had Just 90 Seconds to Deal w/ Spreading Ebola Virus

accountability (1) acted (1) **africa** (4) ahead (1) american (1)
around (1) congress (1) continuing (1) **cure** (2) deal (1) drug (1)
emergency (2) error (1) experimental (1) **expert** (2)
forward (2) funding (2) **happen** (3)
ignore (3) individuals (1) learned (1) liberia (1)
making (2) **medical** (4) money (1) nation (1)
plan (2) prepared (2) **problem** (3)
provided (1) red (1) rooms (1) **safety** (2) secondly (1) slow (1)
something (1) **speed** (2) **spread** (2) **sure** (6)
talking (1) tape (1) texas (1) think (1) treat (1) **treatment** (2)
troops (2) **vaccine** (2) watching (1)
working (3) world (2)

On *Face the Nation*, Majority Leader McCarthy had Just 90 Seconds to Deal with ISIS Threat

actions (3)
administration (2) ago (1)
american (2) authority (2) best (1)
debate (3) differently (1) director (1)
current (1) doctrine (1) failure (2) forces (2)
foreign (2) former (1) forward (1) garbled (1)
generals (2) give (1) goal (2) ground (1)
hit (2) house (3) knew (1) lay (2) legal (1)
lopsided (1) military (1) mission (2) moment (1) months (1)
options (1) people (2) pick (1)
president (3) quickly (1) secretary (1)
sided (1) sit (1) special (2) sure (2) taking (1)
talks (1) think (2) threat (2) trained (1)
troops (2) trucks (1) wants (2) whatever (1)

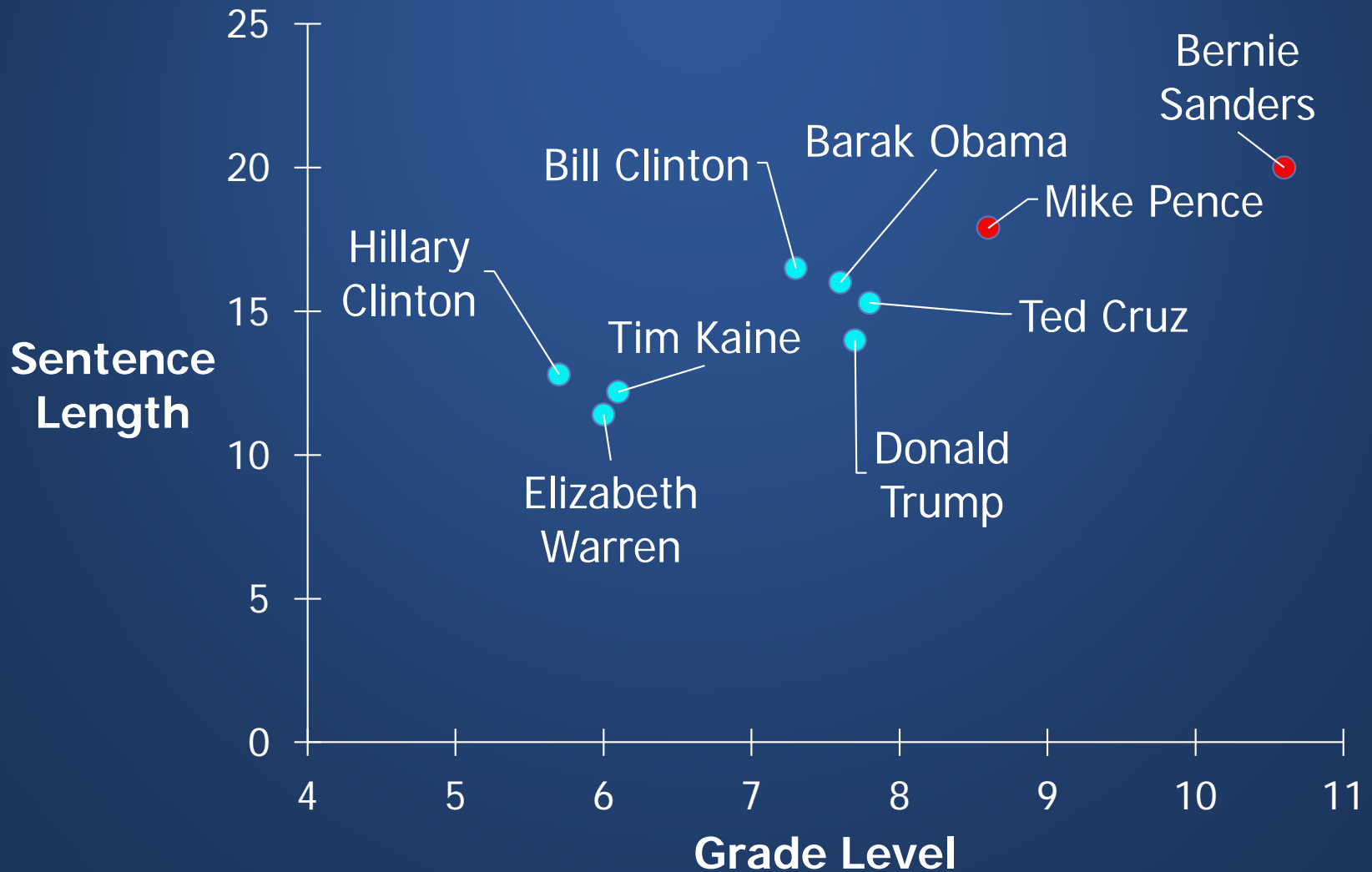
Two-page Letter to Investors by Generation Company CEO Pushes Success Type Words



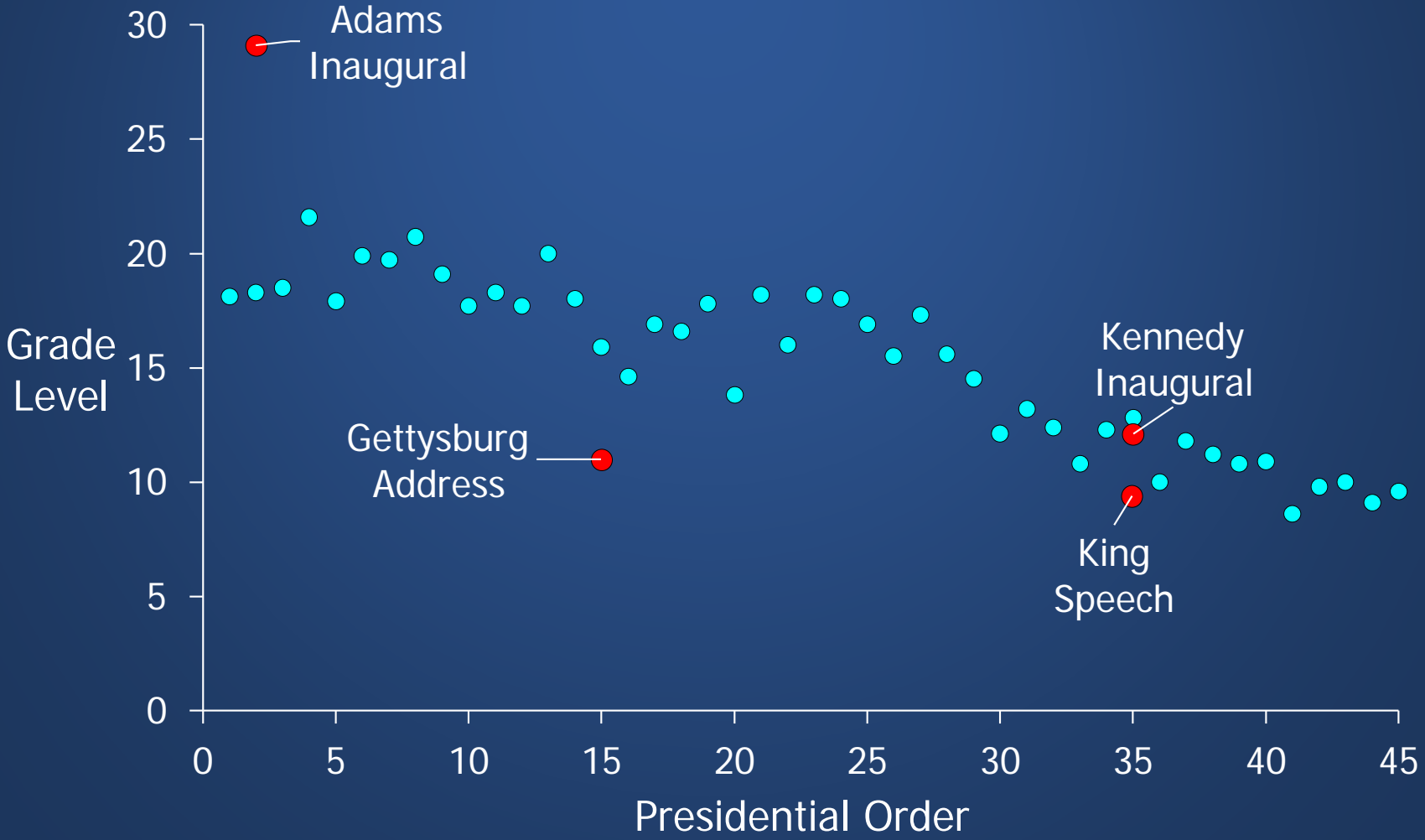
Letter to Parents from Inner-city School Superintendent Focuses on Programs, Not Kids

academic (4) alternative (3) believe (4) campus (4) career (3) choice (3) community (3)
continued (4) critical (2) current (3) **daylight** (12) determined (2) development (4)
discussion (5) **district** (5) **education** (10) ensure (2) environment (4) existing (3)
feedback (2) follow (2) general (2) grade (2) groups (2) instructional (2) leaders (2) leadership (3) learning (4) mission (2)
needs (2) opportunities (3) options (3) personal (2) preparation (5) **program** (6) provide (3)
purpose (2) recommendation (4) restructure (2) review (2) **school** (23) seek (2) services (5)
skills (2) **students** (16) succeed (2) support (7) **twilight** (12) vision (2)
work (2)

Notable Speakers at 2016 National Conventions Spoke at a 6th to 8th Grade Level



Decline in State of the Union Delivery Grade Level is Tied to Wider Audience (Radio, TV, Internet)



The Difference Between Grade Levels 29 & 12 is Obvious in These 2 Inaugural Address Sentences

President John Adams, 1790

- “Relying, however, on the purity of their intentions, the justice of their cause, and the integrity and intelligence of the people, under an overruling Providence which had so signally protected this country from the first, the representatives of this nation, then consisting of little more than half its present number, not only broke to pieces the chains which were forging and the rod of iron that was lifted up, but frankly cut asunder the ties which had bound them, and launched into an ocean of uncertainty.”

President John Kennedy, 1960

- “Divided, there is little we can do – for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.”

Skeptical Audiences Will Engage More When a Speech/Text is Easy to Understand

Speech	Word Count	WPS	Grade Level	Reading Ease	WPP
Target	---	10.0	8.0	60+	20
Gov. Baker, State of the State 2016	3,486	11.1	7.7	68.7	19.8

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Graduate School Policy "Executive Summary"	2,211	16	15	24	55
Graduate School Policy Report	8,400	18	15	29	74

Words and Text ---- can Make the Difference Between Infuriating & Caring

"We are investigating the allegations. At this time we are not admitting any wrong doing and have been told not to comment further."

"As parents and grandparents ourselves, we are horrified by this incident and will fully cooperate with the authorities in the investigation."

3. Messaging Can Make the Best Defense a Good Offense

- Being on the offensive doesn't mean being offensive or going over the top. ^C
- Getting the overarching message out early in an interview sets the tone. ^{D, E}
- Confronting the question head-on, allows a transition to a positive point. ^{F, FF}

4. For Messaging to be Convincing It Must be Delivered Effectively

- Respond conversationally --- not robotically ^G
- Positive can be better than negative ^H
- Provide the reporter/audience signals that a message is about to follow ^I
- Ignore your instincts and be repetitive ^J

5. If You're Not Going to Answer the Question, It's Best to Just Say So

- "Gotcha" questions are always challenging --- but don't make it worse by ducking because the reporter just keeps asking ^{K, KK}
- Blaming the reporter for asking a question you don't want to answer might make good theatre --- but is recognized for what it is by most people ^L
- The best strategy is to decline to respond right up front --- not always easy but generally effective if done with the right touch ^M

6. Interview Interruptions Are Ill-Advised--- Especially When Not by the Reporter

- Reporters can always interrupt and do. But more and more it's not as part of the discussion but as an interrogation. It's disrespectful. Patience and poise usually win out. ^N
- Non-reporter interruptions almost always undermine your credibility and make the story bigger than it should be. ^{O, P, Q}
- Typically a staff member/advisor attending an interview should neither be seen or heard --- staff can signal to a reporter when to end the interview.

7. Apologizing/Reassuring is Always the Right Thing to Do --- When It's Done the Right Way

- You are not the victim --- it's about those that were hurt, frightened or disappointed. ^R
- Get it right the first time --- but keep trying if you don't ^S
- Don't make it a dismissive explanation --- I'm OK how come you aren't ^{T, U}
- Every word counts --- one misstep undermines the effort ^V
- It's not hard to accept responsibility --- if it's part of the company/organization's culture ^W

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