Crisis Management & Crisis Communications for Education Leaders

Bruce Hennes, CEO, Hennes Communications
Sara Clark, General Counsel, Ohio School Boards Association
Adam Lustig, Director for School Safety, Education & Training, NSBA

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Session Objectives

1. Learn and understand the use of the “Damage Control Playbook,” which include practical and actionable activities designed to blunt, avoid and/or mitigate crisis situations.

2. Know how to establish and maintain “control of the message.”

3. Better understand why “no comment” should never be used.

4. Have a better understanding about the relationship between board members and attorneys.

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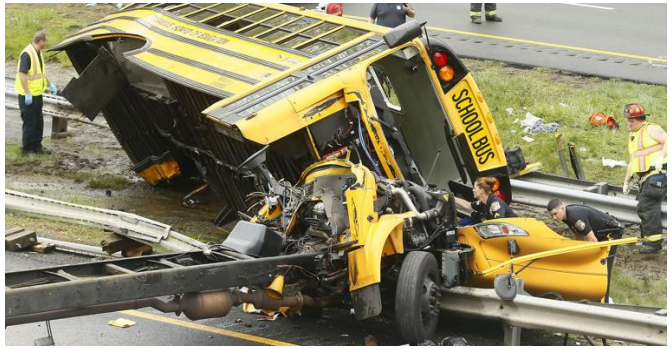

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What You, Your District or Client Might Face

- Accident
- Active Shooter
- Assigned Book Reading Issue
- Bombing
- Catastrophic Weather
- Chemical Spill
- Crime
- Criminal Accusation
- Cyber-Attack / Data Breach
- Discrimination Complaint
- Diversity Issue
- Elimination of Popular Program
- Employee Participated in Attack on U.S. Capitol
- Epidemic/Pandemic
- Explosion
- FERPA or HIPAA Violation
- Fire
- Fiscal Mismanagement
- Food-Borne Illness
- Hazmat Situation
- Hacker Attack
- Inappropriate Comment on Social Media
- Lawsuit
- Mass Casualty Event
- Protest
- Public Humiliation
- Reputational Threat
- Sexual Harassment / Misconduct
- Social Media Threat
- Sports Controversy
- Student Newspaper Story
- Suicide – Teacher or Student
- Teacher Death / Murder / Arrest
- Testing Controversy
- Theft
- Union Grievance/Strike
- Unreasonable Parent

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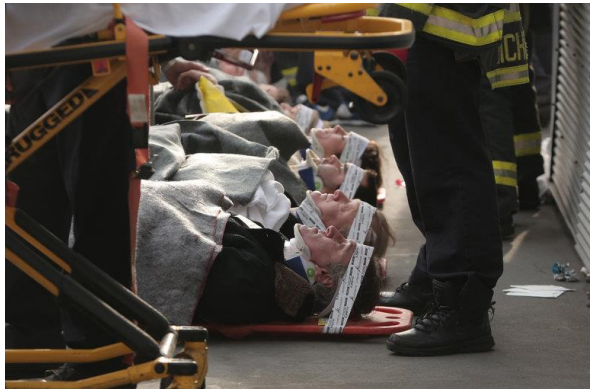
Case Study: The SeaStreak Ferry Disaster



NEW YORK POST Page Six

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2013 / Breezy, 49 / Weather: P. 30 ★ ★ LATE CITY FINAL www.nypost.com $1.00

CAP'N CRUNCH

74 hurt as NYC ferry smashes into dock

A commuter ferry under the command of Capt. Jason Reimer (right) slammed into a lower Manhattan dock during yesterday's morning rush, injuring 74 of 326 passengers.

PAGES 4-5

Gabriele Bacc

Gregory Lecling

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Could This Happen to You, Your District or Client?

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- When the media turns their pen, camera or laptop on you, your district or client
- Who we are
- What we do

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OSBA Partners with Hennes Communications to Provide Crisis Management and Communications Services to Membership

The Ohio School Boards Association (OSBA) has entered into a strategic partnership with Hennes Communications to provide crisis management and communications services to public school systems throughout the state of Ohio facing sudden challenges to their organizations' reputations and operations. With this partnership:

- OSBA member school leaders have access 24/7, 365 days a year to Hennes' crisis communication professionals.
- Hennes works *with* district administrative staff, including attorneys and district or school communications leaders.
- The initial consultation with Hennes consultants about your crisis issue is **free.**

OSBA Chief Executive Officer Richard Lewis: "With Hennes Communications, our members have access to a team of crisis communications specialists at any time on any issue that needs an experienced perspective and specialized talents.

OSBA Chief Legal Counsel Sara Clark: "Hennes Communications understands how attorneys think…school districts already in or about to be faced with contentious issues would do well to have Hennes Communications in the room and alongside their lawyers."

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The Court of Public Opinion

Controversies today are tried in the **Court of Public Opinion** – as often as in the **Court of Law**.

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The Damage Control Playbook

Rule #1: Tell the truth

Rule #2: Tell it first

Rule #3: Tell it all

Rule #4: Tell it fast

Rule #5: The media filters

Rule #6: Fundamental role of reporters is not simply to inform or educate – it's to tell stories

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The Damage Control Playbook

Let’s eat, Grandma.

Let’s eat Grandma.

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Villain

Victim

Vindicator

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Tell the Truth, Tell It All, Tell It First, Tell It Fast

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Tell the Truth, Tell It All, Tell It First, Tell It Fast

What if you

ARE

the Villain?

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Tell the Truth, Tell It All, Tell It First, Tell It Fast

Iterative Journalism

and

the Need for Speed

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Understanding the attorney's role

Advisor

Advocate

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Working Together

- Accessing the attorney
- Keeping secrets
- Keeping secrets, part 2
- Asking questions
- Knowing your limits
- Insisting on timeliness

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The Media Revolution is 'Iterative' and Social: Experts Share How Not to Get Left Behind

By Marilyn Cavicchia

"You're all living in a media revolution," said Thom Fladung, vice president of Hennes Communications. "And you don't even know it."

Offering a window onto one aspect of that revolution, Bruce Hennes, president of the same crisis communications firm, said, "I don't think there's a reporter in the country who's not using Twitter to crowdsource what people are thinking about."

Speaking at this year's Midyear Meeting of the National Association of Bar Executives, National Conference of Bar Presidents, and National Conference of Bar Foundations, Hennes and Fladung helped attendees understand how they should navigate in a world where, as Fladung put it, "The media has changed more in 10 years than in the past 100."

What's New? Iterative Reporting

It used to be that a news article was a single item, published once, Fladung said, and reporters were expected to get every important source into the story, even if it meant trying to reach them six different ways before giving up.

Because articles can, and are, updated easily online, the typical news story is now given out "piece by piece, over time," Fladung said, noting that this is called "iterative reporting."

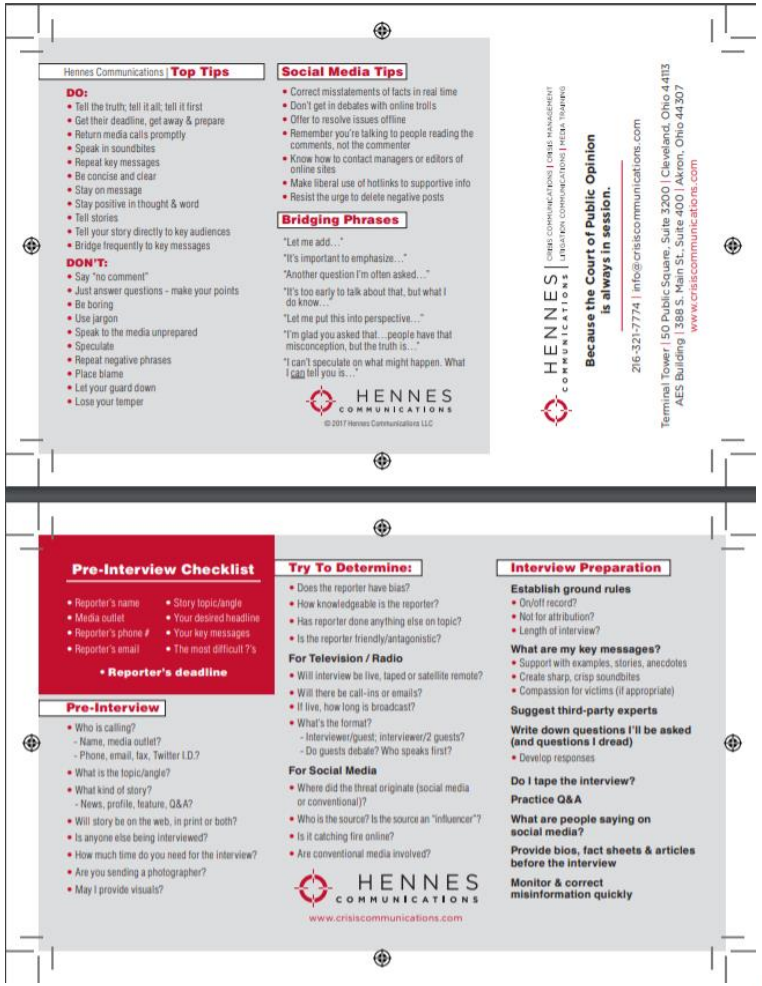
As a source, Fladung added, this means you are no longer indispensable—so you can't make yourself difficult to reach, or you'll miss the chance to put your association in its best light (whether the story is good news for you, or bad news).

"If you don't pick up the phone, you're not in the story," he said, noting that Google's analytics give priority to whichever news outlet broke a story first—which has put pressure on reporters to work faster than ever, and not to spend too much time chasing down sources.

While you could still make it into an update to the story, Fladung added, that's not really where you want to be. "When is the last time you went back on your phone to see if there's been an update to something you read?" he asked, noting that 60 percent of all news content is now consumed via smart phone.

What if you really can't make the reporter's deadline, or you find out after the fact about a story your bar should have been part of? See if the reporter will do a whole new story with a new headline, Fladung suggested—again, so you can avoid being hidden away in an update.

Both Fladung and Hennes confirmed to skeptical audience members that reporters really are receptive to this idea, as long as you honestly do have a lot of new facts to offer. Hennes noted that quite often, reporters are rewarded—including in pay—for



Hennes Communications | **Top Tips**

DO:
- Tell the truth; tell it all; tell it first
- Get their deadline, get away & prepare
- Return media calls promptly
- Speak in soundbites
- Repeat key messages
- Be concise and clear
- Stay on message
- Stay positive in thought & word
- Tell stories
- Tell your story directly to key audiences
- Bridge frequently to key messages

DON'T:
- Say "no comment"
- Just answer questions - make your points
- Be boring
- Use jargon
- Speak to the media unprepared
- Speculate
- Repeat negative phrases
- Place blame
- Let your guard down
- Lose your temper

Social Media Tips
- Correct misstatements of facts in real time
- Don't get in debates with online trolls
- Offer to resolve issues offline
- Remember you're talking to people reading the comments, not the commenter
- Know how to contact managers or editors of online sites
- Make liberal use of hotlinks to supportive info
- Resist the urge to delete negative posts

Bridging Phrases

"Let me add…"

"It's important to emphasize…"

"Another question I'm often asked…"

"It's too early to talk about that, but what I do know…"

"Let me put this into perspective…"

"I'm glad you asked that…people have that misconception, but the truth is…"

"I can't speculate on what might happen. What I can tell you is…"

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AES Building | 388 S. Main St., Suite 400 | Akron, Ohio 44307
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Pre-Interview Checklist
- Reporter's name
- Media outlet
- Reporter's phone #
- Reporter's email
- Story topic/angle
- Your desired headline
- Your key messages
- The most difficult ?'s
- **Reporter's deadline**

Pre-Interview
- Who is calling?
  - Name, media outlet?
  - Phone, email, fax, Twitter I.D.?
- What is the topic/angle?
- What kind of story?
  - News, profile, feature, Q&A?
- Will story be on the web, in print or both?
- Is anyone else being interviewed?
- How much time do you need for the interview?
- Are you sending a photographer?
- May I provide visuals?

Try To Determine:
- Does the reporter have bias?
- How knowledgeable is the reporter?
- Has reporter done anything else on topic?
- Is the reporter friendly/antagonistic?

For Television / Radio
- Will interview be live, taped or satellite remote?
- Will there be call-ins or emails?
- If live, how long is broadcast?
- What's the format?
  - Interviewer/guest; interviewer/2 guests?
  - Do guests debate? Who speaks first?

For Social Media
- Where did the threat originate (social media or conventional)?
- Who is the source? Is the source an "influencer"?
- Is it catching fire online?
- Are conventional media involved?

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Interview Preparation

Establish ground rules
- On/off record?
- Not for attribution?
- Length of interview?

What are my key messages?
- Support with examples, stories, anecdotes
- Create sharp, crisp soundbites
- Compassion for victims (if appropriate)

Suggest third-party experts

Write down questions I'll be asked (and questions I dread)
- Develop responses

Do I tape the interview?

Practice Q&A

What are people saying on social media?

Provide bios, fact sheets & articles before the interview

Monitor & correct misinformation quickly

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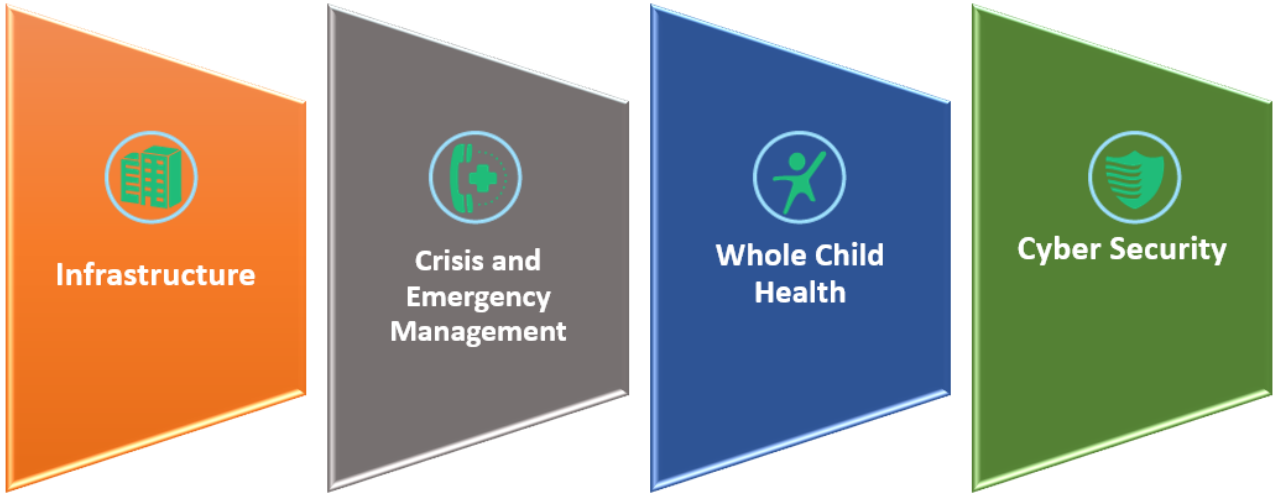
NSBA Center for Safe Schools

- Provides a national forum and platform by which school district leaders/employees, students, parents, and communities can **educate, engage and be empowered** to ensure that schools are a safe place to learn and grow.
- Promotes and develops collaborative relationships with and between state school boards associations, communities, educators, law enforcement, emergency responders, and other entities concerned with school safety.



nsba Center for Safe Schools

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NSBA Resources and Events

https://nsba.org/Resources

Online Annual Conference - April 8-10
Online Equity Symposium – July 13-14
CUBE Annual Conference – Atlanta, GA
Equity Symposium West – Oklahoma City, OK

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