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Crisis Comm & Media Relations E-Newsletter

February 1, 2014

Now in our 12th Year of Publication

Winner of the 2012 Gold "Rocks Award" for Newsletters and the 2013 Gold "Rocks Award" for Crisis Communications from the Public Relations Society of America - Cleveland Chapter

[Bruce Hennes](#)   [Barbara Paynter APR](#)  
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Our regular office number is 216-321-7774.

However, if your situation is [DEFCON 2](#) (critical and extraordinarily time-sensitive), please call our 24/7 Emergency Crisis Comm Hotline at 216-223-8771.

If necessary, leave a voicemail and we'll get back to you within 30 minutes.



Water Everywhere, and Not a Drop to Drink

If you are one of our clients or you've attended one of our seminars you've heard us preach the importance of transparency in a crisis. "Tell the truth. Tell it first. Tell it all." That's what works to get your bad news off the front page and the evening news broadcasts.

This week, we witnessed the impact of NOT following this advice. Freedom Industries, the company responsible for a chemical spill that left 300,000 people in West Virginia without water for a week, waited two weeks to reveal that a second chemical was in the storage tank that leaked into the Elk River a mile upstream from the area's main water plant. And - we couldn't make this stuff up - the company did not want to release specific information about the chemical, claiming that information was "proprietary."

That's right. Hundreds of thousands of residents worried about the safety of their drinking water, but the company wouldn't tell experts exactly what to test for. Meanwhile, Freedom Industries filed for bankruptcy in the wake of lawsuits, and the governor ordered the company

to dismantle and remove all of its above-ground storage tanks and related equipment from the site.

Stay tuned; this could be in the news for quite some time.

Barbara Paynter
Hennes Paynter Communications

From our colleague, Gerald Baron: OK, let's see what can go wrong in communications when you leak a chemical into the drinking water of 300,000 neighbors. 1. You can fail to prepare. 2. You can not have the capability of communicating with the media, community and public with a website and social media. 3. You can have no capability of notifying neighbors or the community. 4. You can tell people you will keep them informed without telling them how, where or when. To read the rest of his list, click [here](#).



First, a Bully Governor; Now, a Bully Congressman

"Let me be clear to you, you ever do that to me again, I'll throw you off this f-king balcony... I'll break you in half. Like a boy." This is not dialogue from "American Hustle." Inconceivably, it's a U.S. Congressman threatening a TV news reporter [while cameras rolled](#). Rep. Michael Grimm, R-N.Y., was being interviewed by a reporter from NY1 News after the State of the Union address. When asked about a campaign fund investigation, Grimm blew his stack.

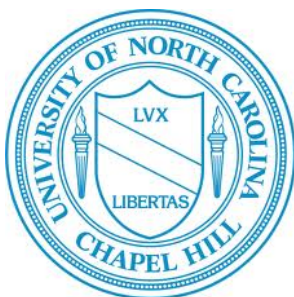
Never a good idea. In Grimm's case, the reporter took the high road and accepted Grimm's day-after apology. But the damage was done. On camera.

Most people won't behave this egregiously toward the media. But if you even snap back at a reporter's line of questioning or push a camera away, beware. That video will be played ad infinitum in news promos, on newscasts, on web sites, Facebook pages and perhaps shared as animated GIFs. It will live on in web archives and YouTube.

To avoid this, never go into an interview unprepared. Even if the topic is positive, think about controversial issues in your sphere. Anticipate tough questions, have answers and messages rehearsed and ready in case you are sandbagged by an aggressive reporter.

And remember, not everyone gets off attacking a reporter as easily as Congressman Grimm. When a video bomber tried it with Weather Channel Jim Cantore, he got a stiff knee to the groin on [live TV](#).

Howard Fencil
Hennes Paynter Communications



The Dirty Little Secret on Campus

A prestigious university. A storied athletic program. And what apparently has been a dirty little secret on campus for years - sham academic courses protecting eligibility for "no-show" athletes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

UNC began investigating bogus courses in the school's African and Afro-American Studies Department in 2011, though the fraud may date back to the 1990s. James Dean, UNC executive vice chancellor, finally

apologized on January 25, 2014. "We made mistakes. Horrible things happened that I'm ashamed of," he said.

But the apology should have come from Chancellor Carol Folt - not the #2 guy. In a reputation-defining crisis, the top person must step up to the plate, admit guilt and apologize. Instead, she delivered carefully crafted talking points to UNC Trustees ("We actually do feel accountable."). That was after Folt and Dean played the blame game - saying the fraudulent courses were not created on their watch, blaming the disgraced (now indicted) department chair and even denouncing the whistleblower who brought the fraud to light.

The university failed the transparency test miserably. The moment senior leadership got a whiff of the allegations, they should have launched an investigation and started communicating. They should have explained how they will help students who were academically short-changed by the sham classes and outlined steps they will take to be certain it never happens again. We are only now beginning to see movement in this direction - but is it only because they got caught?

Howard Fencil
Hennes Paynter Communications



Christie Tweets

[A Treasury of Twitter Humour on Christie's Press Conference](#) *BBC News*

Someone at the BBC in London compiled tweets sent out on Twitter by the reporters watching the Governor Christie 2-hour interview a few weeks ago. They are hilarious, with numerous to Springsteen, the Sopranos and others in-between.



"Stay Thirsty, My Friends"

[Who Killed the Catchphrase?](#) *New York Times*

Where, exactly, is the modern advertising catchphrase? Whither the beef? Even without invoking *Mad Men* and the glory days of ad agencies, you might have noticed that the catchphrase, while not quite extinct, has lost much of its resonance in recent years. A major reason behind the shift is the new way we watch TV. We're no longer a televisual monoculture, glued to the same three or four channels each night and held hostage to their commercial breaks.

[100 Greatest TV Quotes & Catchphrases](#)

[100 Greatest American Film Quotes & Catchphrases](#)

[Greatest Advertising Catchphrases](#)



Social Media Crisis Communications

[Con Ed Reveals the Top 10 Online Crisis Management Secrets that Saved Them From Superstorm Sandy](#) *Bulldog Reporter*

When crisis strikes, your organization needs a focused, schematic and surefire solution. Your social media audience will expect an instantaneous response - and it's never been more valuable to have a bulletproof crisis management plan with the latest tactics for handling online and offline crises. Con Edison of New York is a master of digital crisis communications, and the team's handling of Superstorm Sandy is the truest testament to its

expertise. This case study will prove you do not need to rely on the media to tell your story.

News From Hennes Paynter



Hennes Paynter Communications

From our first issue in 2002 to today, the Hennes Paynter Crisis Comm & Media Relations E-Newsletter helps you communicate your way through adversity.

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[Hennes Paynter Communications](#) is one of the few agencies in the U.S. focused exclusively on crisis communications. To talk to us about our crisis management services, please contact us at 216-321-7774.



The Sad YouTube

[The Lost Treasures Of The Internet's Greatest Cesspool](#) BuzzFeed

"I would like to send you a memory." Buried deep within the internet's most notorious comment section lies a treasure trove of personal stories that prove the power of pop music better than any video ever could. The comments this writer discovered on YouTube will either break your heart - or make it fly.



Another Sign of the Decline of Western Civilization

We actually don't have a whole lot of interest or sympathy for Justin Bieber. But we think it's worth noting the world found out about his arrest for DUI from the Miami Beach Police Department via Twitter. It's still a good thing to own your own newspaper or TV station, but if you don't, Twitter is a very powerful tool that can help you "pierce the media filter." Actually, this is a great lesson for crisis communicators. You can read more [here](#).



Short Takes

[Axe Super Bowl Ad Makes an Excellent Point in 60 Seconds](#) *Mashable*
So far, our favorite ad.

[The Period is Pissed](#) *New Republic*
When did our plainest punctuation mark become so aggressive?

[The Most Common Press Release Mistakes](#) *CommPro.biz*

[Will Brian Williams Have to Choose Between Fallon and Letterman?](#) *TVNewser*

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Upcoming Events & Seminars

We often do presentations about crisis communications for industry trade groups, law firms, bar associations, hospital, education and other professional associations. Often, those events are open to the public or for a fee payable to the sponsoring organization. For a list of upcoming events and seminars, click [here](#) - or contact us to customize one for your organization.



Need a Presenter for Your Next Meeting or Conference?

Are you looking for an eye-opening, inspiring presentation for your next event? If your organization, company or association is searching for something different - a content-packed, entertaining, how-to customized seminar on how to manage the media - then we should talk. Don't just take our word for it - see [where we've talked before](#) and [what other people say](#) about our seminars.

Managing the Media: Lawyers & The Press CLE

As almost any general counsel of a large, publicly traded, consumer-oriented company will tell you, legal controversies today are tried in the Court of Public Opinion -- at least as much as in any Court of Law. Every organization, especially large, publicly-traded corporations, has much to gain (or lose) by the way a legal controversy is positioned in the media. Because the value of a company's reputation is immeasurable -- and perhaps its largest uninsured asset -- a corporation loses when the brand image is tarnished, even if the corporation technically wins at trial. Furthermore, since most legal controversies are settled prior to trial, the Court of Public Opinion has arguably become the most important battleground affecting not only good will and market share, but legal bargaining power and settlement negotiations. Managing this battleground, therefore, has become integral to many corporations' legal strategies.

Vol. 22, 2009



For more information about presentations and training for attorneys and their clients, please click [here](#).



Crisis/Media Training & Coaching

Your organization is in trouble...your CFO has been arrested...the company truck was in an accident...hackers hijacked your database...the pressure is on...the camera crew is at the door....

Do you know how to handle a high-pressure TV interview? Will your messages survive the editing booth? Do you know where to put your hands? What to wear? Do

you look at the camera - or at the interviewer?

It takes a lifetime to build a reputation and only a few seconds to destroy one. In a split second you could find yourself in a position where you need to know how to handle the media or be a public spokesperson. Would you know what to do or how to respond?

More important - do you have the necessary skill set to "manage the message" and advance the cause of your business, agency or nonprofit?

You can be certain the senior executives at virtually all of the Fortune 500 companies have been through media training, working with a media coach to learn how to handle adversarial situations with journalists and stakeholders. Perhaps it's time for you to learn this specialized set of survival skills?



We also offer spokesperson & presentation training and coaching, designed to improve your daily interactions with colleagues, employees, investors, journalists and other outside parties.

Call Bruce Hennes, Barb Paynter and the staff at [Hennes Paynter Communications](#) today at 216-321-7774 and talk to us about media, spokesperson and presentation training and coaching for you, your top execs -- or anyone who might have to hold the fort down with a reporter until the appropriate spokesperson can be located. For more about our training services, click [here](#).

Ask us, too, about how we can help you create, implement and test a crisis communications plan. For more information about those services, click [here](#).



**When your organization or reputation is threatened, you need a specialist.
A crisis communications specialist.**



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OUR FAVORITE QUOTE: You simply can't communicate your way out of a situation you've behaved your way into (credit to Don Etling at Fleishman-Hillard for this insight).

WARREN BUFFET'S 4-STEP CRISIS COMM STRATEGY: Get it right. Get it fast. Get it out. Get it over.



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Hennes Paynter Communications | 3200 Terminal Tower | 50 Public Square | Cleveland | OH | 44113