

James E. Lukaszewski

*Lukaszewski on crisis communication. What your CEO needs to know about reputation risk and crisis management,*

Rothstein Associates Inc., Publisher, Brookfield, Connecticut 2013, 400 p., ISBN 978-1-931332-57-6

In recent decades James E. Lukaszewski has established himself as a top expert in crisis communication and conflict management in the US, Canada, Latin America and worldwide. He is an advisor to CEOs of major corporations, and to heads of the US government and military institutions, organizations and associations. His workshops, trainings, and lectures have been attended by thousands of public relations professionals, crisis communication managers, lawyers, academics, and students. J. Lukaszewski is also a prolific writer, author of books, articles, papers, and presentations during numerous industry events, seminars, conferences held by Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) or International Association of Business Communicators (IABC). The series of four detailed treatises on crisis communication<sup>1</sup> published by his company and PRSA have been and still are used by public relations experts in many countries, due to practical, down-to-earth approach (despite some aging – as the general rules of crisis communication remain unchanged).

His last book is titled *Lukaszewski on crisis communication. What your CEO needs to know about reputation risk and crisis management*<sup>2</sup> and delivers on its promise, or even exceeds it, since

it is also a valuable source of advice, strategies and techniques for communication and public relations managers, lawyers and institutional counselors, scholars, and students, and other stakeholders who have to cope with conflicts, public criticism, activist groups, adversary media, and attacks on their integrity on the net and in social media. This book – despite its professional and practical approach – is also a worthy read for academics and students of public relations, communication, marketing, management, and law. It not only gives a lot of solid advice for would-be practitioners how to handle crises, but also points out to many issues, problems and solutions in crisis communication that could delineate new areas of research agenda for accomplished and aspiring communication and PR scholars.

Academic journals in applied social or economic sciences, like communication research, public relations or management, rarely discuss or review books written by practitioners in the field. This is due to concerns about their selection of proper methodology (or lack thereof), criticism of anecdotal evidence, and insufficient sources, like footnotes, bibliography and systematic research. Scholars and researchers tend

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Lukaszewski, *War stories and crisis communications strategies. A crisis communication management anthology*, Vol. 1, New York 2000; idem, *Crisis communication planning strategies. A crisis communication management workbook*, Vol. 2, New York 2000; idem, *Crisis communication plan components and planning. Crisis communication management readiness*, Vol. 3, New York 2005; idem, *Media relations strategies during emergencies. A crisis communication management guide*, Vol. 4, New York 2000.

<sup>2</sup>J. Lukaszewski, *Lukaszewski on crisis communication. What your CEO needs to know about reputation risk and crisis management*, Connecticut 2013.

to disdain insights provided by consultants and practitioners, unless these are “war stories” described, dissected and filtered by other scholars. Another reason for this gap between academics and professionals – according to Wright and VanSlyke Turk – relates to futile attempts to build a common research agenda, with practitioners stressing applied studies and their professional benefits, and scholars emphasizing more abstract and theoretical subjects<sup>3</sup>.

This silo mentality and mostly paternalistic approach of scholars to ethical capabilities and intellectual horizons of practitioners clearly affect advancement of the profession. As a result it strengthens the *status quo* and is detrimental to development of relatively new disciplines of communication, public relations and crisis communication. This standpoint clearly hinders sharing best practices between all interested parties, openly discussing concepts and tools applied by experts in real life public relations and crisis communication programs, and juxtaposing the value of solutions suggested by practitioners with normative proposals by academics. Embracing practitioners’ contribution, even though it is mostly based on their own experience, should certainly enrich an academic research agenda and provide food for thought for scholars and students of communication. Therefore, it would be worthwhile for academics to pay more attention to *Lukaszewski on crisis communication. What your CEO needs to know about reputation risk and crisis management*, released in 2013 by a publishing house, specializing in business continuity, disaster recovery, risk, crisis management and communication. Despite Lukaszewski’s recognition and respect among PR community in the US and worldwide, scholars mostly overlooked the

book, even though it has been popular among practitioners.

Lukaszewski’s book possesses a rare quality among PR literature: it is useful for communication practitioners, who can apply its contents directly in their everyday efforts, and – at the same time – could be thought provoking for academics exploring crisis communication, conflict resolution and such fields as litigation public relations. Vast experience of the author gathered during his career was summarized in 10 chapters, covering the nature of crisis, preparations needed for leadership and management of an organization to handle unwanted visibility and unavoidable criticism from different sources. In addition to this, the book goes a long way in explaining the development of crisis plan, its components and models, conducting media relations in crisis, getting in touch with hostile journalists, bloggers, organizing face-to-face meetings, interviews, briefings, and conferences, handling social media, which spur communication professionals and managers to work 24/7, and are employed by activists to exert pressure on an organization. Author also deftly described how crisis communication experts should cooperate with lawyers and how civil and criminal litigation communication on behalf of organizations should work to reduce reputational, financial, and personal losses to these organizations and their leaders.

In case of Lukaszewski’s book, both groups – practitioners and academics – can be satisfied by receiving a substantial portion of common-sense and innovative guidelines how to handle crisis communication. The publication is also important from the perspective of showing compassion for the affected, telling the truth, reducing damages to reputation and strengthening

---

<sup>3</sup> D. Wright, J. VanSlyke Turk, *Public relations knowledge and professionalism: challenges to educators and practitioners* [in:] *The future of excellence in public relations and communication management. Challenges for the next generation*, ed. E.L. Toth, New Jersey–London 2007, p. 583.

morale of employees and senior managers, and the general idea on the principal role of proper care of victims in any crisis, which should be observed, analyzed and evaluated by communication scholars and students.

It is worth noting, though, that Lukaszewski's conclusions presented in the book have matched the recent summary of crisis communication research by T.W. Coombs, an accomplished academic, in the first issue of "Research Journal of Institute for Public Relations" in 2014<sup>4</sup>. His extensive research about crisis communication has proven that there are three consistent findings that could be useful for crisis managers: time is of critical importance, and being the first to report the crisis is beneficial to the organization; victims should be emphasized in public crisis messages and treated with utmost care, and any cases of misinformation have to be rectified immediately<sup>5</sup>.

At least two of these tenets formulated by Coombs have been confirmed in Lukaszewski's book. His first and most important assumption is that any crisis is constituted by creation of victims: people, animals, or living systems. According to Lukaszewski, a crisis is "a major operations disruption, which poses a significant threat to employees or customers, user safety and wellbeing, or to the company's reputation, that can or will cause explosive, unplanned visibility and victims"<sup>6</sup>. The highest priority and crucial aspect in managing any crisis is the victim dimension. Victims – especially when treated indifferently, without true compassion and at least indirect support from perpetrators – potentially provide emotional, even explosive material for media, journalists, onlookers,

activists, internet users, and other stakeholders whose actions and criticism can significantly affect the company's reputation. Under certain circumstances they can even bring it down to the point of bankruptcy. Lukaszewski illustrated his opinions and recommendations with many colorful examples of crises he had witnessed or handled personally, and – even though he didn't give names of clients – he was not shy to admit that sometimes his suggestions were not accepted with harmful effect to the client's reputation.

His decades of handling crisis communication taught him that it pays off to be ethical: concerned management and effective crisis response strategy reduce further victims (or self-styled victims) and potential damages paid during litigation. Lukaszewski believes that legal procedures should be rather settled than tried in court, due to costs of legal fees, victims' growing demands, and media support and court's sympathy for an underdog. He calls for including communication experts in any litigation team, and working on equal footing with lawyers, otherwise long-term client's losses would be much higher: "The check you write today for the settlement may well be the smallest check you'll ever write in this matter"<sup>7</sup>.

The book is full of such wits, that can make subjects for research on crisis communication: "Speed of action beats smart action every time", "Those who will talk will control destiny of those who remain silent", "When we create victims, the nature of our exposure intensifies", "Any information provided as »inside scoop« to employees or other stakeholders frequently becomes public", "Ignoring media won't make

<sup>4</sup>T.W. Coombs, *State of crisis communication: evidence and the bleeding edge*, „Research Journal of Institute for Public Relations”, No. 1, September 2014, p. 3, <http://www.instituteforpr.org/state-crisis-communication-evidence-bleeding-edge/> [accessed: July 1, 2015].

<sup>5</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>6</sup>J. Lukaszewski, *Lukaszewski on crisis communication...*, op. cit., p. 22.

<sup>7</sup>Ibidem, p. 312.

them go away and may, in fact, actually stimulate more coverage”, “When it comes to balance and accuracy in media, you’re on your own (the yo-yo factor). Therefore, generally it doesn’t pay off to ask for corrections in media”, “Apologies are always on time – but the sooner the better”.

Since crisis communication is an applied field and a scientific discipline, it is crucial that practitioners and academics learn from one another, and exchange ideas and solutions to improve crisis managers’ clout how to reduce the losses that the crisis can inflict on the institution and its stakeholders. Such contribu-

tions to the discipline as Lukaszewski’s last book should be appreciated and popularized among academics and students. Lukaszewski has been doing quite a job in advancing professional and ethical crisis communication. He is always willing to share his insights with young communication professionals and PR students in the US and overseas. This includes PR students of the Institute of Journalism at the University of Warsaw, who hosted him in October 2014 for a Skype lecture and Q & A session from Minnesota.

*Jacek Barlik*



Tine Ustad Figenshou

*Al Jazeera and the global media landscape*

Routledge Tylor & Francis Group, Nowy Jork 2014, 208 s., ISBN 978-0-415-81443-0

Decyzja o przejściu amerykańskiego kanału Current TV przez katarską spółkę Al Jazeera Media Network i jego przemianowaniu na Al Jazeera America, która zapadła pod koniec 2012 roku, wywołała komentarze, że w ten sposób emirat znad Zatoki Perskiej zamierza wpływać na amerykańską opinię publiczną. Jednocześnie decyzja o wejściu tej stacji na rynek amerykański pociągnęła za sobą komentarze odwołujące się do głoszonej przez Al Jazeerę koncepcji promocji „globalnego Południa” jako nowej przestrzeni informacyjnej, bowiem do tej pory ta część świata była pomijana na rzecz dominującej Północy. Wyjście poza pierwotnie zdefiniowany krajobraz medialny to przełomowa decyzja, która pokazała, że media w XXI wieku tworzą nowy system, w którym przepływ informacji zachodzi w sposób inny niż dotychczas.

Tine Ustad Figenshou to norweska badaczka pracująca na Wydziale Mediów i Komunikacji

Uniwersytetu w Oslo, która od początku swojej kariery naukowej zajmowała się Al Jazeerą, a recenzowana pozycja to owoc jej ponad dziesięcioletniej pracy polegającej na zbieraniu materiałów, rozmowach z przedstawicielami stacji, zarówno w głównej siedzibie w Dausze, jak i w Londynie, oraz analizowaniu zawartości przekazu medialnego. Figenshou ma na koncie kilka publikacji na temat Al Jazeery, jej teksty można znaleźć w najważniejszych czasopiśmie naukowych z dziedziny komunikacji. *Al Jazeera and the global media landscape* to jak do tej pory jedyna pozycja książkowa w jej dorobku naukowym, jednak liczba poruszanych w niej wątków skłania do przypuszczeń, że Figenshou z pewnością przygotuje jeszcze niejedną monografię na temat Al Jazeery.

Osią publikacji jest hipoteza dotycząca końca ustalonego porządku w medialnym krajobrazie mediów elektronicznych na świecie. Do tej pory