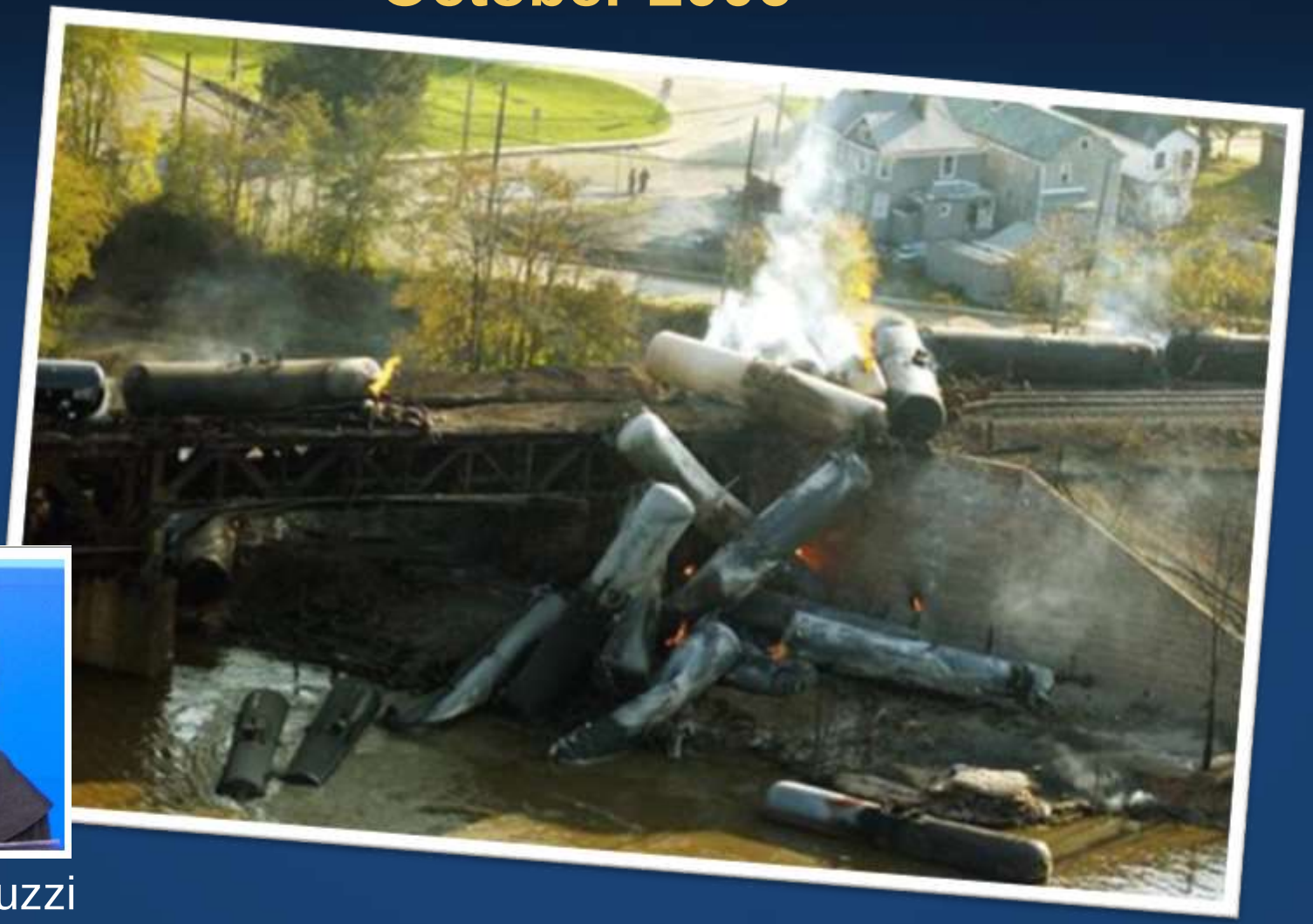
National Transportation Safety Board

The Accident – Now What?

Managing the Aftermath through Effective Crisis Communications

Robert Sumwalt

Pennsylvania
October 2006



Lauren Peduzzi

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
May 2015

Peter Knudson

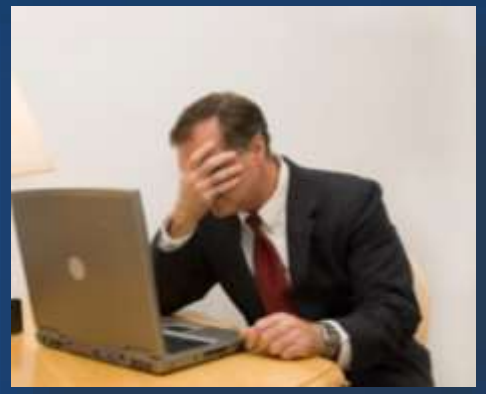
Lac-Mégantic, Quebec

July 6, 2013

Could this be you?

Could this be you?

- Reputations suffer
- Credibility destroyed
- Confidence shattered

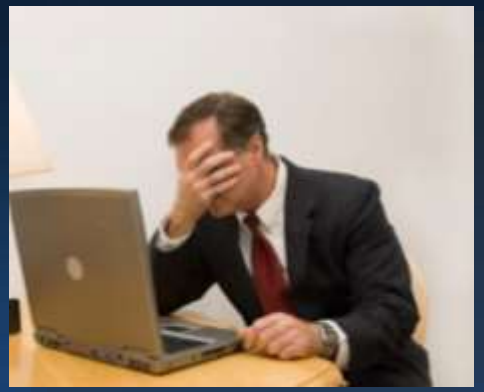


Could this be you?

Your organization may survive after a poorly handled crisis, but your career may not.

Could this be you?

Your organization may survive after a poorly handled disaster, but your career may not.



Could this be

YOU?

The way a crisis is publically handled can either make or break you.

Advance Preparation

Advance Preparation

In order to effectively manage *after* a crisis, you must prepare *before* the crisis.

Advance Preparation

- Plan – have one
- Practice the plan
  - Drills, table-top exercises
- Anticipate
  - Prepare media templates in advance
  - Website and other marketing considerations

Good Execution

Execution Strategies for Effective Crisis Communications

1) Prepare Yourself
2) Display Command Presence
3) Show Compassion
4) Demonstrate Transparency
5) Project Credibility
6) Remember your Message

Crisis Communications Execution Strategy #1

PREPARE YOURSELF

Prepare yourself

- Know the facts
- Identify your talking points
- “Murder board”

Snow brings traffic to a standstill in Atlanta
Updated: Wednesday, January 29 2014, 02:22 PM EST
Like
Tweet
Pin it
KENT
ECCU
VANGUARD CHARTER ACADEMY
Closed - All Evening Activities Canceled

Prepare yourself

Crisis Communications Execution Strategy #2

DISPLAY COMMAND PRESENCE

Command Presence

- Be in control; control the environment
- Don’t be overrun by the media

Command Presence

- Be in control; control the environment
- Don’t be overrun by the media

Command Presence

Please raise your hand.
When I call on you, state your name, your media affiliation, and ask your question.
Thank you.

P.S. – Don't be defensive!

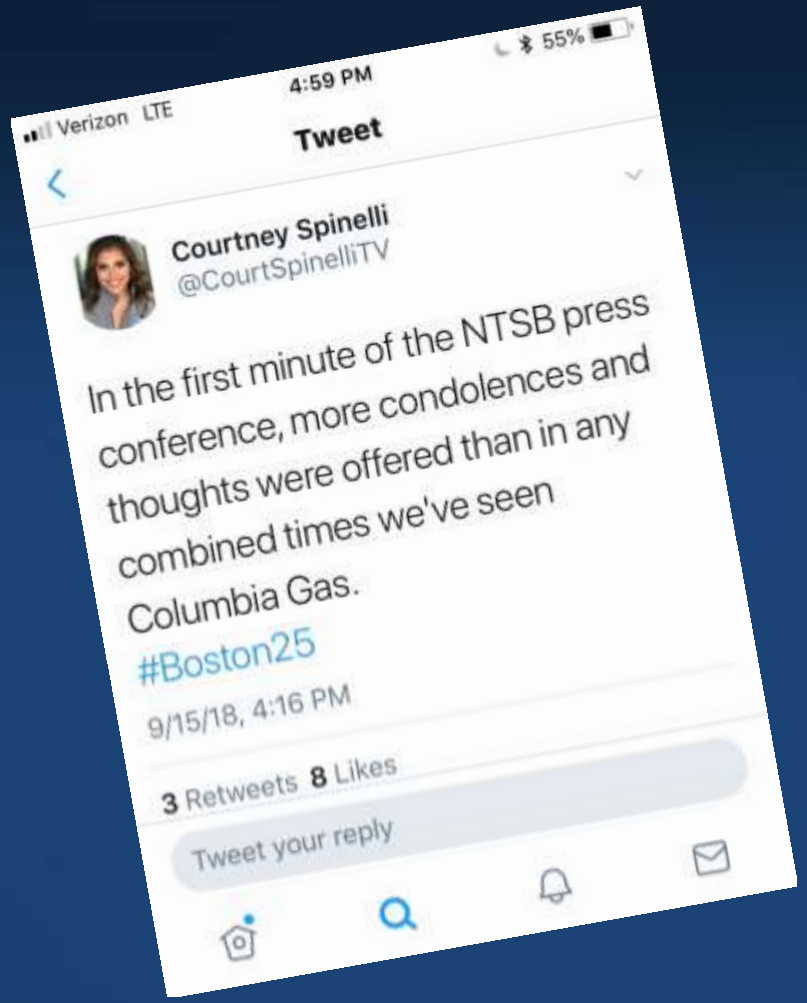
Crisis Communications Execution Strategy #3

SHOW COMPASSION

At approximately 9 this morning, a flight operated by …

Before I go any further, on behalf of the NTSB, I would like to extend our condolences to the families and friends of the victims of this tragic accident.

- Don’t *read* this – speak from the heart!
- Show that you care!
- Show compassion!


Verizon LTE
4:59 PM
55%
Tweet
Courtney Spinelli
@CourtSpinelliTV
In the first minute of the NTSB press conference, more condolences and thoughts were offered than in any combined times we've seen Columbia Gas.
#Boston25
9/15/18, 4:16 PM
3 Retweets 8 Likes
Tweet your reply

Crisis Communications Execution Strategy #4

DEMONSTRATE TRANSPARENCY

NBC News Investigation of Crumb Rubber

UNITED STATES
ENVIRONMENTAL
PROTECTION AGENCY
USE
OTHER
DOOR
UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
NBCNEWS.COM

The way you answer *does matter*

What was the speed of the airplane as it departed the runway?

"I can't answer that."

If you are the investigator

"One of the many things the investigation will do is develop a complete timeline of events, including speeds throughout the accident sequence."

If you are the operator

"The NTSB is conducting the investigation, so that question would best be directed to them."

Weapons charges dropped
guilty to
open
container of alcohol
NBCNEWS.COM

Crisis Communications Execution Strategy #5

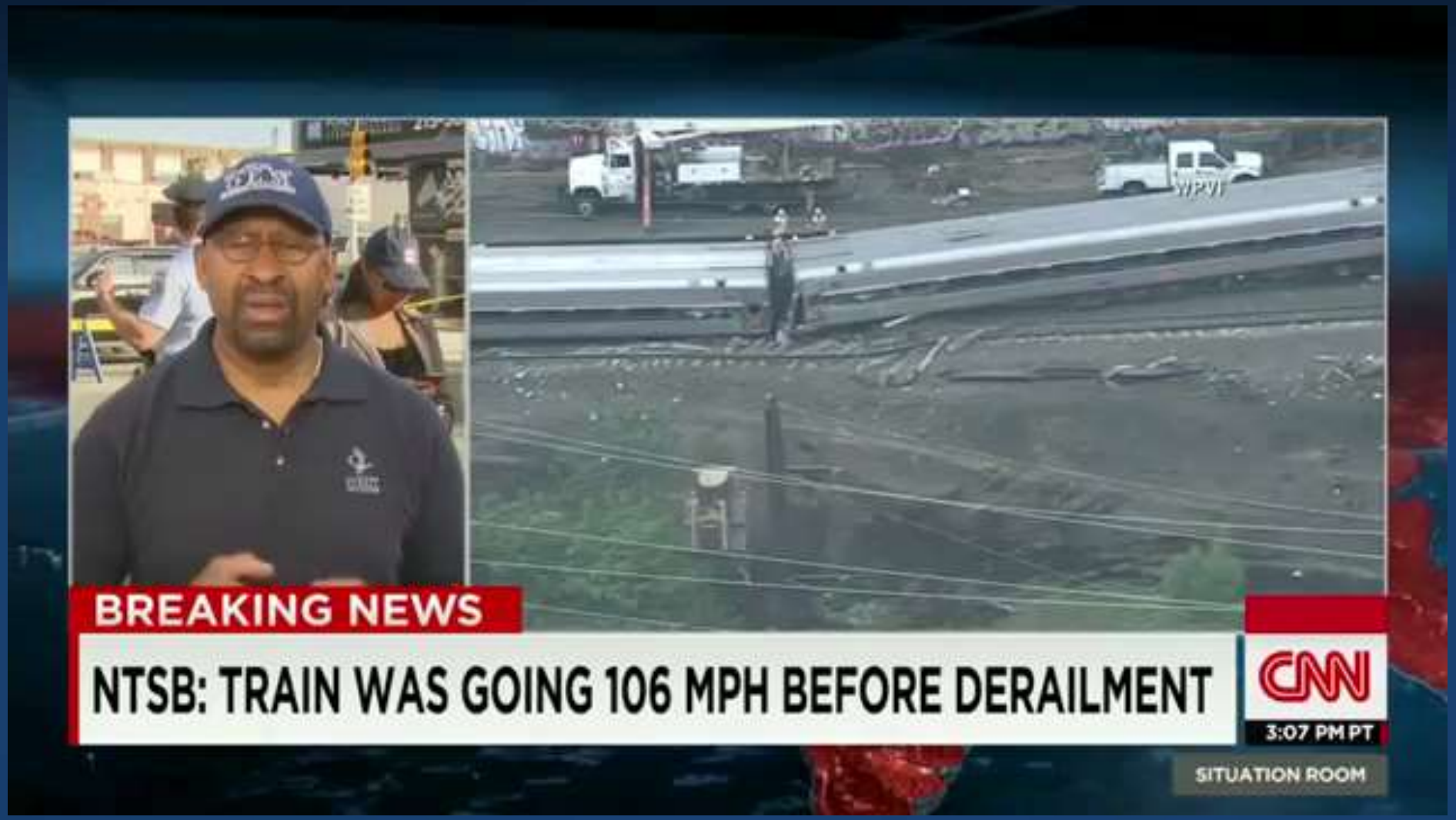
PROJECT CREDIBILITY

“Stay in your lane”

Don’t talk about things that are outside of your area.

Stay in your lane

Stay in your lane



Stay in your lane

NTSB Official Scolds Philly Mayor's 'Inflammatory' Amtrak Crash Comments

VIDEO 78

by Josh Feldman | 6:48 pm, May 13th, 2015

BREAKING NEWS
NTSB: TRAIN WAS GOING 106 MPH BEFORE DERAILMENT
LIVE
CNN
DOW -7.74
TO BOARD TRAIN
PHILADELPHIA MAYOR SAYS IT'S UNCLEAR HOW MAN
MEDIA

Crisis Communications Execution Strategy #6

REMEMBER YOUR MESSAGE

NEW DEVELOPMENTS
NTSB Interviewed Amtrak 188 Engineer
abc
MYSTERY ON THE TRACKS
INSIDE THE AMTRAK INVESTIGATION
TSARNAEV SENTENCED TO DEATH
JEB BUSH'S ROUGH WEEK

The Pivot – your best friend.

- When asked a question that you are not prepared to answer, pivot to your message.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS
NTSB Investigator on Amtrak Crash
abc NEWS
MYSTERY ON THE TRACKS
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Good Luck!

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

E PLURIBUS UNUM