

Hello and welcome to my February 2010 Newsletter

Jeff Ansell News & Views

Everything you're exposed to in media is just someone else's interpretation of issues and events, so view it with an open mind. Skillful communication with media and in presentations can make all the difference in how your message is reported and received. It's a complicated mix of delivery and interpretation, and an ability few truly master, yet it is something anyone can learn or improve upon.

Topics for this newsletter:

- 1.) TRANSPARENCY and FULL DISCLOSURE
- 2.) ADDRESS EACH CRISIS ON ITS INDIVIDUAL MERIT
- 3.) NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH SO HELP ME GOD
- 4.) MAYOR OF SAN FRANCISCO OFF THE RECORD
- 5.) FRIENDLY REPORTERS - AVOID COLLATERAL DAMAGE
- 6.) LESSONS LEARNED FROM A TIGER
- 7.) SOCIAL MEDIA and CRISIS COMMUNICATION
- 8.) JEFF ANSELL DAY PROCLAIMED IN HOUSTON

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues.

Remember . . . The Microphone and Camera are ALWAYS ON!

While promoting his new movie, Mel Gibson couldn't resist taking a shot at a reporter when he was asked to comment on his drunken tirade a few years ago. It happened when the interview was over.

Warning – foul language.

<http://tinyurl.com/y8b335z>

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1.) TRANSPARENCY and FULL DISCLOSURE

We all quickly tire of buzzwords, like “transparency” or “full disclosure,” but the internet and social media make it incredibly difficult to hide secrets or bias, which means these buzzwords will be around for a long time, maybe forever.

When you make a statement, either during an interview or online, someone, somewhere could eventually connect you in a six-degrees-of-separation kind of way to an aspect of the story that might reveal your bias.

Bias in itself isn’t a crime or unethical. We are all biased in some way. The challenge occurs when bias is hidden, either purposely or inadvertently.

We see examples of bias in media regularly. Sometimes we recognize it immediately, and other times it slips by under the radar.

As you know, newspapers are struggling. The strain is so great some have succumbed to bankruptcy. Newspaper people often blame the recession for the lack of advertising revenue, and in a sense they are right, but it’s not the entire story. Lack of advertising is the symptom, but not the disease.

I’ve published this newsletter since 1999, and over the last decade have quoted statistics a number of times from companies like PEW Research who report that readers have steadily lost trust with news media. Even though the news industry is in crisis, the media still refuse to admit it is partly to blame for its own demise. Bias in news, and transparency, are often tied to news companies when they slant their stories to suit their advertisers. In some cases, the bias is even more nefarious and politically connected.

Quite often someone being interviewed is not aware of the bias and they say things that make their situation worse. The more you are able to think on your feet the better you will be able to manage your message and reputation.

Here are a few examples of bias in media you might find interesting.

Fiscal Times and The Washington Post

<http://tinyurl.com/yh4baml>

NY Times and Political Bias

<http://tinyurl.com/yzh9tsg>

FOX News and the Cropped Video of Martha Croakly

<http://tinyurl.com/yzh2259>

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2.) ADDRESS EACH CRISIS ON ITS INDIVIDUAL MERIT

Loblaws, a major Canadian food retailer, recently found itself in crisis mode after making an important decision based solely on “standard corporate operating procedure.”

Briefly, Loblaws and Atlantic Wholesalers Ltd., filed a joint lawsuit against a driver who was operating a van involved in a horrific accident where seven Bathurst High School basketball players were tragically killed.

The two companies filed the suit to recover \$40,688 in damages regarding the cleanup of petroleum that leaked from a transport truck owned by Atlantic Wholesalers Ltd. that was also involved in the accident.

The Telegraph-Journal asked me to comment on the issue and I told them, “Maybe they had a process in place that whenever there was an accident, some low-level bean counter launched a lawsuit.”

Locals were extremely upset upon hearing of the lawsuit, and as a result Loblaws quickly retracted the legal action and apologized. Residents however, still recommended a boycott of the company.

As I told the Telegraph-Journal, I don’t think the anger against Loblaws will last long because its quick action helped remove resentment and limited the story to a single news cycle.

When you make a mistake, acknowledge it, genuinely apologize, and describe how you will remedy the situation.

You can learn more at the Telegraph-Journal;
<http://telegraphjournal.canadaeast.com/search/article/915943>

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3.) NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH SO HELP ME GOD

Easier said than done.

How many times have you tried to answer a question truthfully, only to have the words spill out sideways when you open your mouth?

Maybe it was the way the reporter framed the question that started your heart pounding. Maybe it was because you actually have something to hide, even though the little lie you just told is worse than the transgression you were trying to conceal.

The secret is to have command over the words that leave your lips.

Depending on your situation, sometimes a reporter is just fishing, and they don't have any evidence, but they throw it out there just to see your response. Reporters for the most part are pretty intuitive. It's their job.

Quite often, when you lie to them, they know it, and they may not call you on it at the time, but your uncomfortable answer gives them incentive to dig deeper.

Answering questions truthfully is critical. Often however, the truth is not good enough to satisfy media and sometimes stakeholders as well.

Managing an interview is complicated, but it is a learned skill that almost anyone can master with knowledge of media strategies and techniques, as well as practice. It's all about being prepared, aware, confident, and knowing what you want to say and what you want to accomplish.

If you walk into an interview unprepared you are at a disadvantage. Reporters interview people every day, and some have been doing it for decades.

Reporters don't just call or show up out of the blue. They have a story in mind and in most cases are looking for someone like you to help them tell it. Your job is to position yourself on the side of the story that benefits you.

Even Politicians Tell Little White Lies

<http://blogs.abcnews.com/politicalpunch/2008/04/obama-is-smokin.html>

The Invention of Lying (YouTube Vid)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hhGleqTytz8>

When Journalists Lie to Get a Story – from American Journalism Review

<http://www.ajr.org/Article.asp?id=598>

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4.) MAYOR OF SAN FRANCISCO OFF THE RECORD

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom inadvertently demonstrated how NOT to manage a television interview.

Hank Plante, journalist with CBS5 interviewed the mayor who hit the wall right from the first moment he opened his mouth.

Mayor Newsom ignored questions, laughed nervously, criticized the press, and when he left the interview room proclaimed "off the record" that he was disappointed with the reporter's questioning.

At the end of the broadcast the news anchor and reporter explained how they interpret the term, *off the record*

The interview is painful to watch, but important to see.

Watch the CBS video here;

<http://cbs5.com/video/?id=58275@kpix.dayport.com>

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5.) FRIENDLY REPORTERS - AVOID COLLATERAL DAMAGE

Quite often a reporter will call looking to have you help them tell their story.

There is no crisis, and they don't want to harm your company or trap you.

They just need an expert to help explain the details.

Most of the time reporters are looking for someone to confirm what they already know. They simply need a third party, you, to explain an issue so their audience will understand. It is at times like this that good speaking and presentation skills will serve you well.

If you are confident, know your business, and know how to get your message across eloquently in front of a camera, your reputation and that of your company will be enhanced. If you drop the ball, your contribution will never make it to air and they will probably never call on you again.

The best way to achieve proficiency is to practice in a controlled environment.

The last thing you want to do is experiment in real time in the real world.

Practicing in front of a mirror is one thing, and you probably do it from time to time, but if you really want to hone your skills the best place to do it is in front of a rolling camera in a lifelike studio.

You learn on two levels this way. First, you get to experience the feeling of being interviewed, and then you get to watch the results in a safe environment.

Sports and music stars don't just show up and perform, and neither do great executives or politicians.

They practice . . . and so should you.

Here are a few TIPS from my web site

<http://www.jeffansell.com/media-tips.html>

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6.) LESSONS LEARNED FROM A TIGER

Picking up the pieces from the Tiger Woods scandal, one cannot help but suspect there is much more to the story than what has been reported so far.

Tiger, after all, was a master at shaping his public image, and certainly has access to the best communications counsel money can buy. Yet, when it came time to step up and confront his now public transgressions, he instead chose to hide behind a door.

No doubt, there must have been someone in his entourage who counseled him to come forward, and it begs the question of why he chose not to. My personal suspicion is that there must be videos, pictures, and audio tapes somewhere that are deeply incriminating, which would make Tiger's situation even more serious for him, and the companies with which he is affiliated.

Considering the goodwill Tiger generated over the years, it "was" possible for him to begin achieving redemption by issuing public statements referencing the pain he caused his family, and by also making a commitment to treatment for what appears to be a sex addiction. However, when mistresses started to pile up, and the world realized Tiger's sins were worse than suspected, that very narrow window slammed shut. Even his most ardent fans lost faith.

Here's an initial overview of the economic damage anyone affiliated with his brand suffered; a study by researchers at the University of California reported ". . . Woods had deflated between \$5-12 billion of the market value of companies he endorsed."

His career earnings amount to about one billion dollars, but only about 10% of it was generated by on course winnings, the rest was from endorsements.

Victor Stango and Christopher Knittel, economics professors at the University of California reported, "looked at stock-market returns for several of his corporate sponsors in the 13 trading days between Mr. Woods's car crash and his announcement that he was leaving golf indefinitely, comparing them with other companies in the same industries." They also reported the scandal reduced shareholder value in those companies by 2.3 percent.

Woods initially denied all allegations of domestic trouble and adultery.

Lie #1 - He claimed his wife was actually trying to save him by bashing out the windows of his SUV with a golf club.

Lie #2 - When media started to figure it out, he then switched gears claiming it was a private matter between him and his wife.

Lie #3 - He then claimed it was only one affair.

Lie #4 - He then insisted news media was irresponsible for pursuing what he characterized as a non-event.

Lie #5 - He then called one of his mistresses and asked her to disassociate herself from him by removing her name from her cell phone.

Lie #6 - Woods also asked his mistress to lie about their relationship.

Lie #7 - Woods accused the public of being irresponsible because the public was (allegedly) drawing the wrong conclusions.

Throughout all of this he refused to speak with police and give a statement.

As the lies piled up speculation and rumors increased, the rumors outgrew the reality when people pegged his affairs in the hundreds, and the scandal's pendulum swung from being tragic to hilarious and back.

We know now more details of that fateful car crash night. Allegedly, Woods took a sleeping pill and while he was sleeping his wife, Elin, used his phone to text his mistress, Rachel, pretending to be Tiger. His wife confirmed her suspicions by tripping up the mistress. Woods' wife, in a rage, woke up Tiger from a drugged sleep and allegedly began hitting him, which drove him out the house barefoot to his car, which he crashed on the front lawn. It was at this point his wife bashed out the windows of the Cadillac SUV with a golf club.

I always recommend to my clients that they tell the truth, express genuine remorse, and indicate how they will fix the matter. In Woods' case it was also good advice. However, when he lied to us, the public, and made it personal for all of us, the level of arrogance it demonstrated made it impossible for the public to consider forgiving him.

Once the public lost faith, the companies endorsing Woods were backed into a corner and had no choice but to bow to public sentiment.

The numbers from a shareholder perspective . . .

http://www.news.ucdavis.edu/search/news_detail.lasso?id=9352

A look at the loss of endorsements by the NY Post . . .

<http://tinyurl.com/ybbnley>

WSJ Barron's asks, "Will Tiger's Loss be Nike's Gain?" referring to the trend of corporations discontinuing their use of celebrities to promote their brands.

<http://tinyurl.com/yfdyr3l>

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7.) SOCIAL MEDIA and CRISIS COMMUNICATION

I was recently interviewed by Sonya Bell from the Canadian Press for the Chronicle Herald. She asked me about the challenges older politicians and executives have with social media, and I told her, "There's a generational rollover happening because a lot of the politicians who are over 50 now find themselves in a world where Facebook and Twitter are very prominent. They have to get onboard or else risk looking dated."

Managing a crisis effectively is harder than most people think, and it is even harder today when the social media Paparazzi/Twitterazzi are hot on your tail.

Technology can be both a boon and a nightmare.

When you use it proficiently it helps you connect with millions, but when it is used against you millions get to watch you writhe in pain in full public view.

Here are a few tips to help you play safe in the Social Media Sandbox.

TUNE IN and check occasionally to see what others are saying about you. Don't be obsessive, but also

don't ignore rumors. There are a number of good tools to make the job easier, and if you don't want to do it yourself, hire a media communications company.

Here's a good Twitter app for your toolbox - <http://www.monitter.com/>

STAY CALM! Just because someone is talking about you or your company in a way that initially upsets you is no reason to overreact. First consider the source. Are they reputable and believable? Don't respond in kind to someone the world considers crazy, at least do not do it directly. If you do feel compelled to respond, make sure you know all the details and do not get drawn into an online argument. State your case clearly and leave it.

FIX IT just as you would in the real world. If you are in the wrong, address the issue just like you would if you were standing in front of a reporter. Tell the truth, apologize if necessary and tell people how you will rectify the situation.

SET A PRECEDENT by telling your story first. If you think someone is about to smear you get the truth out there so when people start to Google you they find your version of the story. Quite often the first story people hear is the one they believe so don't hesitate to set the record straight ASAP.

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8.) JEFF ANSELL DAY

Shameless plug! I recently did a program at Rice University, and to my surprise the then Mayor of Houston, Bill White proclaimed it Jeff Ansell Day!

I didn't get a key to the city, but I did receive a proclamation, which I have proudly framed. It was a first for me and pretty cool.

FYI, I'm available for Jeff Ansell Day in your city too. Just ask!

That's it for this edition of News & Views.

I hope you found it informative and valuable.

Sincerely,
Jeff Ansell

Be well . . . and Thank You !!

DON'T FORGET TO PRINT THIS NEWSLETTER.

Read it on your commute or at home.

Check into my site for updates between Newsletters.

<http://www.jeffansell.com/>

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