

Crisis Management

Nobody asked but ...

Recently, Forbes magazine published an article listing four rules of crisis management. The rules were illustrated with examples from the current hullabaloo over the confirmation of the appointment of a Supreme Court Justice. My purpose here is not to discuss the Senatorial folderol (you can read the article for that), but to look at crisis management (consequently information management) on a broader plane, with a voluntarist viewpoint.

The four rules are:

Recognize the crisis as a crisis;

Get out as much information as possible as soon as possible, particularly any negative information;

Avoid saying anything that has to be withdrawn;

Avoid doing anything that looks like a cover-up.

Recognize the crisis as a crisis — Most people will do anything to keep their head in the sand, but we have many lingering problems today (remember the 105 year old “temporary” income tax). We were told that the tax scam was only for World War I (recognizing a crisis as a crisis, perhaps), but after having bought the excuse, most Americans promptly stuck their heads back in the sand. *Voila!* Over a century of tax slavery. The lesson here is to never trust a politician to not take advantage of a crisis, or even the pretense of a crisis. The thoughtful person, who sets an alarm to check the promise, is desperately needed — but she is rare indeed.

Get out as much information as possible as soon as possible, particularly any negative information — Ancient wisdom is that no man will fashion the club with which he is to be beaten. We cannot depend on politicians to be objective about pertinent information. They will only be forthright about negative information that is negative for the partisan opposition. Therefore, we must tolerate the media, maybe even goad them into digging harder, maybe even shame them for being content with opinions, maybe chide them for trying to jump to conclusions. Never forget that information must always be orderly (“information”). We must be skeptical of dysformation being sold as information.

Avoid saying anything that has to be withdrawn — Pure 100 proof information does not have to be withdrawn in the light of later revelations, because purity is comprised of facts, not wishes. The Cambridge English Dictionary defines having egg on your face as being “very embarrassed because of something you said or did: *eg* he told everyone the deal was happening, and if it falls through now he’ll have egg on his face.” It seems that politicians, bureaucrats, and yellow journalists have a pathological compulsion to get egg

on their faces. We must let them do it without deterring us from pursuit of objective fact

Avoid doing anything that looks like a cover-up — The only time the above trio of folk will disengage from speaking too soon, is when they are compelled to see the crisis as an opportunity for a coverup. The pol and the minion cannot resist secrecy, and the media cannot resist labeling anything as a coverup. We must work against the tendency to theorize conspiracy. These are just rats lost in a maze. They are the least likely to speak about facts.

— Kilgore Forelle