
Professional PR & Crisis Training for Public Power Utilities

Jackson Jackson & Wagner
Robin Schell, APR, Fellow PRSA
Stacey Smith, APR, Fellow PRSA

Agenda

- ❖ **Issues Anticipation**
- ❖ **Issue Teams**
- ❖ **Crisis Communication Basics**
- ❖ **Discussion & Case Examples**
- ❖ **Creating Your Own Crisis Plan**

Issue Anticipation

Research:

- 2 Questions --

- What's going on out there?
- Can it happen here?

- Scan media (traditional and social)

5 Types of Issues

1. Latent
2. Emerging
3. Hot
4. Fallout
5. Association

5 Causes of Issues

1. Organization Failure
2. Honest Disagreement
3. Bedfellow
4. Scandal
5. Accident

Creating Issue Anticipation Teams

- Blend of
 - ❖ Expertise
 - ❖ Ages
 - ❖ Interests/connections
 - ❖ World views
- Rotate membership over time

Issue Anticipation Teams Activities

- Create List of Possible Issues
- Brainstorm Realistic Strategy Options
 - ❖ Long and short-term goals
 - ❖ Scenarios – short stories
- Monitor 5-10 top issues

Basics: Prepare for Communicating

- Build network of industry contacts
- Build network of opinion leaders
- Identify information sources
- Decide who will run crisis, company
- Identify appropriate spokespeople(s)
- Establish methods for communicating
- Create template documents, language

Basic Strategy

- Inform Internal, Opinion leaders, Media
- Message strategy:
 - ❖ Admit error/problem exists
 - ❖ Apologize
 - ❖ What are you going to do about it
 - ❖ What is the timetable for doing it
- Communicate early & often
- No speculation! Just the facts
- Consistent messaging

Basics: Communicating During A Crisis

- Rehearse
- Take the “front page” test
- Do a “lessons learned” review

Lessons From PSNH: Ice Storm 2008

- Direct communication with key audiences
- Establish single point of contact
- Consistent message with Emergency Management contact
- PSNH liaison network
- Conference calls & phone trees

Lessons from PSNH: Ice Storm 2008

- Real-time website, www.psnhnews.com
- Consistent spokesperson team for 24/7
- Pre-approved url templates
- Social media: YouTube, Twitter, FB
- Updated resources (Constant Contact database)
- *Systems constantly evolve!*

RMLD: Reputation Recovery

- IG finds misuse of expenses Dec. 2001
- Resignation of GM & 2 others, April 2002
- Ongoing media coverage through early 2003
- Audits by PWC, Town Manager, IG
- Employees join unions/job insecurity
- Town bylaws change/tighter financial regulations
- Found \$28,000 inappropriately spent; but investigations cost thousands

RMLD: Reputation Recovery

- New GM: closer relationships with town manager/selectmen in 4-town area
- Keep employees informed; linemen are eyes & ears
- PR Director: established solid media relationships
- RMLD visible as leaders in community
- Customer satisfaction surveys every 3 years to measure reputation

HED: Employee Embezzlement

- VT's largest public embezzlement -- \$1.6 million
- Longtime (36-year) employee
- Small family utility (13 employees) shaken
- FBI investigation
- \$100,000 in expenses/attorneys & accountants
- Statewide media attention with ongoing triggering events to keep issue alive

Lessons Learned From HED

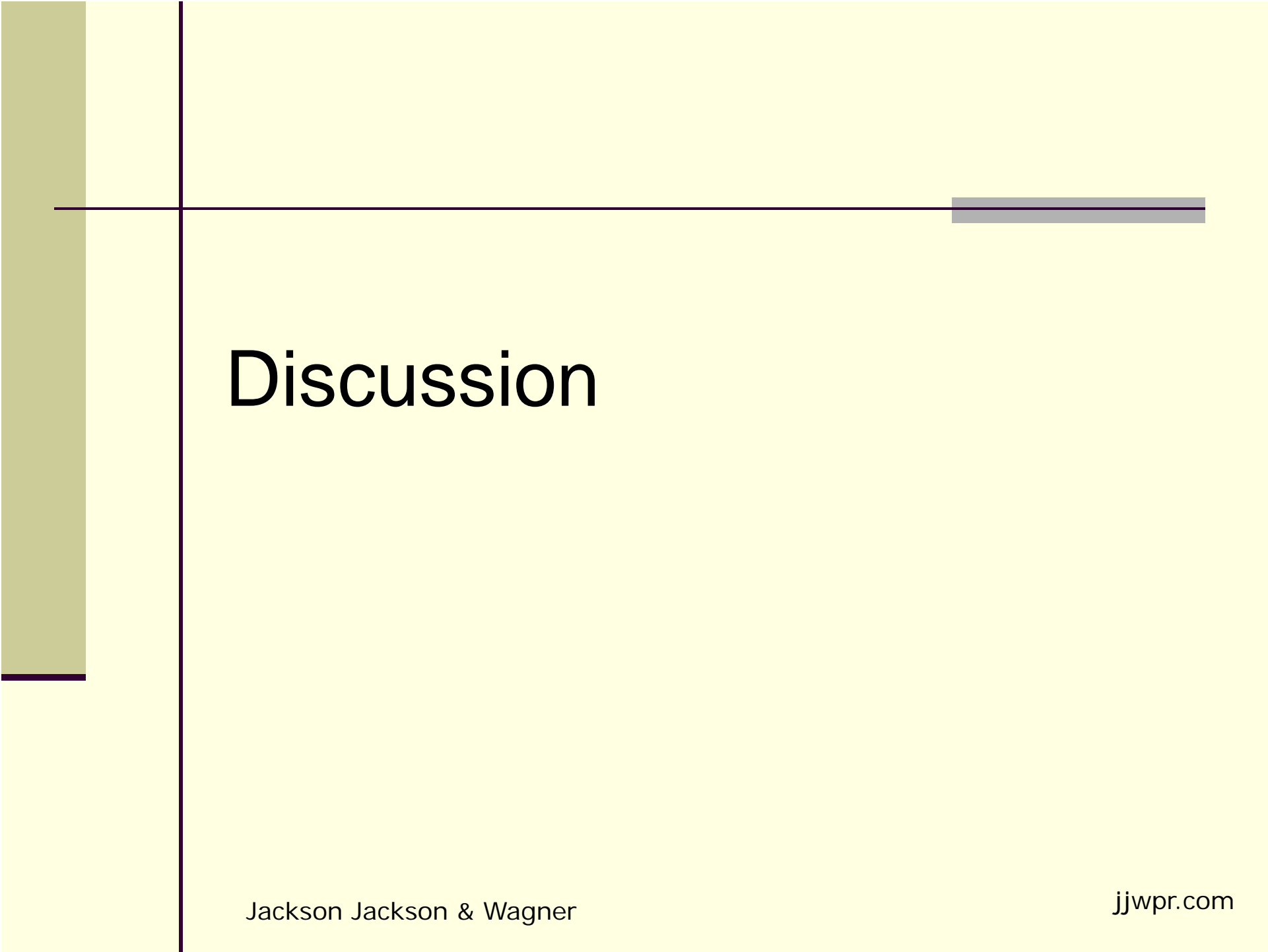
- Take immediate action/calls to AG, FBI
- Get in front of the rumors with your messages
- Bring internal audience up to speed
- Organize spokesperson strategy
- Good media relationships help!
- Open communication
- Talk about/implement new procedures
- Prepare for the long haul

Developing Your Own Crisis Plan

- Get preparatory decisions agreed to based on various scenarios
 - Spokespeople/Experts
 - Language strategy
 - Physical plant – where house/contain media, employees
 - Methodology for keeping key publics informed (employees/families, customers, opinion leaders, etc)
 - “War room”

Developing Your Own Crisis Plan

- Create detailed plans for top 5 scenarios
 - Materials
 - Language
 - Core team
 - Communication methodology
- Rehearse
- Update
- Rehearse
- Update
- Rehearse



Discussion