

Hello and welcome to my September 2009 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.) GUILTY BY IMPLIED PERCEPTION
- 2.) BARACK OBAMA ACCUSED OF LYING – IN CONGRESS
- 3.) I'M SORRY – SO SAYS SERENA & FANS AGREE
- 4.) QUICK RESPONSE IN A CRISIS
- 5.) USING HUMOR APPROPRIATELY & EFFECTIVELY
- 6.) SEX & THE FLIPPANT SOUNDBITE
- 7.) TWITTER LEAKS OBAMA'S JACKASS COMMENT
- 8.) OLYMPIC MEDIA TRAINING FOR PROSTITUTES

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

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In mid-October, I'm delivering a program at Rice University in Houston. The focus will be on "Media Strategies for Dealing with an Angry Public." The date is October 13. If you're in the area and interested in attending, please join us.

Call Vernell Jessie at 713.970.7165 to register.

Click here to learn more - <http://www.jeffansell.com/flyer01.html>

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1.) GUILTY BY IMPLIED PERCEPTION

Perception is nine tenths of the law.

Former Ontario attorney general Michael Bryant was tried and convicted in media even before emergency services finished cleaning up the fatal accident.

News media is fast on the scene today. In a heartbeat, Twitter users dispatched the news that Bryant had an altercation with bicycle courier Darcy Sheppard that resulted in the courier's death, and in short order mainstream journalists arrived to cover the story.

Bryant, a lawyer and at the time CEO of Invest Toronto, was caught in a media vortex. He was charged with criminal negligence causing death, and even though the jury is still out regarding his innocence or guilt, reports began circulating immediately from citizen journalists and mainstream news media implying Bryant had acted irresponsibly in causing Sheppard's death.

After the dust settled it was reported Sheppard had contact with police regarding alcohol consumption earlier that day, and that only a short time later Sheppard's death occurred.

Media was quick to create an atmosphere that very subtly overshadowed the real events. They reported early on that Bryant drove recklessly after being out for dinner and drinks with an unidentified woman, which naturally caused people to speculate it was someone other than his spouse in the car. Turns out it was Bryant's anniversary and the mystery woman was his wife. More importantly, Bryant was not drinking.

Initially, bike couriers of Toronto mobilized. They, and others were angry and ready to lynch Bryant.

Mainstream news media also reported the following day that Bryant hired a high profile PR agency to manage the fallout, and for a time the PR agency's involvement became the story. The implication was that a rich businessperson was using PR pros to spin his way out of an accident that triggered a death.

After his release from police custody, Bryant met with reporters to offer

his condolences to Sheppard's family. He also asked media to respect his personal privacy and that of his family while the case was being investigated.

News media needed to stereotype Bryant as a powerful celebrity in contrast to a common bicycle courier, and they struck pay dirt when they discovered he hired a PR firm to manage the message.

The moral to this unfortunate incident is that if you are in the public eye, be prepared at all times to manage your reputation. You can't predict a crisis, but you can handle it better with proper training.

Globe & Mail report <http://tinyurl.com/n6bhtp>

CBC report <http://tinyurl.com/nagu57>

Toronto Star report Video <http://www.thestar.com/News/GTA/article/689220>

CBC Video of courier protests in the street <http://tinyurl.com/mtgusz>

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2.) BARACK OBAMA ACCUSED OF LYING – IN CONGRESS

When was the last time you heard an American president called a liar during an address to Congress? Times have changed folks.

Representative Joe Wilson, hopped up on caffeine pills (*or so they say), couldn't contain his frustration, and during President Obama's recent address to Congress regarding health care reform he loudly yelled out, "You lie!" to a stunned audience – live and televised.

The president replied, "That's not true" and continued his speech.

Back up a sec, "Hopped up on caffeine pills?"

According to *The Hill (as in Capitol Hill blog), Wilson "popped caffeine pills like candy in 2007." Apparently The Hill thinks the pills are still having an effect. The Hill is a political online publication, but the real interest here is that this old story on their blog was republished by major news media two years later, which means the caffeine story went from 0-60 at

a time when Wilson wanted to be taken seriously.

What we learn from the Wilson story, among other things is, if you do or say something inappropriately it will eventually come back to haunt you at a time you least expect.

The story about the caffeine pills made the NY Times, and also elicited over 400 Comments on The Hill's blog. Many of the comments accuse The Hill of low brow bias and reminded everyone Barack Obama has admitted to illegal drug use and smoking. Some even re-hashed (excuse the pun) his admitted use of pot, and allegedly, cocaine.

Wilson tried to insult Obama but it blew back at him instead.

The Hill – Wilson Apologizes <http://tinyurl.com/npcxrx>

NY Times Caffeine report - <http://tinyurl.com/lf52ko>

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3.) I'M SORRY – SO SAYS SERENA & FANS AGREE

Serena Williams, tennis star extraordinaire lost her composure during a Grand Slam tournament and berated a linesperson using a string of expletives during the U.S. Open.

No big deal some say. Athletes are temperamental, and especially in the heat of competition. I'll give you that. Losing one's temper during a sporting event that could pay out hundreds of thousands of dollars is understandable, not really acceptable, but I get it.

Serena was mad. Her big mistake however, was not apologizing immediately after she calmed down.

When she did eventually get around to apologizing it seemed hollow and forced, which was big mistake number two.

Interestingly though, a day later when Serena was being interviewed by Patrick McEnroe courtside in front of a large crowd that included her fans at the Grand Slam award ceremony, McEnroe asked her about her apology. The

crowd began to boo almost immediately, but they weren't booing Serena. They were expressing displeasure with McEnroe for bringing it up again.

Serena's sister, Venus, jumped in quickly and told McEnroe, "What I think the crowd is saying Patrick, is let's move on."

So what have we learned here?

One, if you're going to apologize do it quickly and make it sincere.

Two, get your allies, or fans in this case, to back you up.

Three, learn to manage your emotions.

Yahoo! report - <http://tinyurl.com/mcn33g>

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4.) QUICK RESPONSE IN A CRISIS

In a crisis situation your company needs to respond as quick, or quicker than mainstream news media. Today, quite often during a crisis people turn to your website, which means you have a first-hand opportunity to tell your story.

As long as you are properly trained and confident in relaying the right message you can keep, or get people back on your side.

First, you must clearly understand what people need to see and hear, and then you must be able to deliver it effectively.

Both of these requirements necessitate special skills. Fortunately, they can be learned, and with a little practice, perfected.

Media training teaches you to deliver an effective message during a crisis situation to a mainstream news media TV camera, as well as to a video channel on your website; and effective speaking skills ensure your message is delivered and received in a manner that benefits your company.

Good media presentation skills will ensure you deliver your message

effectively across any medium.

When crisis strikes, get your perspective online and on record before news media has an opportunity to unduly influence your market.

Don't wait. Be the first on the scene and the first to respond.

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5.) USING HUMOR APPROPRIATELY & EFFECTIVELY

Saying sorry is never enough when your company creates a situation that negatively impacts people. You also have to follow up in a manner that gets them back on your side.

If the crisis is NOT life threatening or catastrophic, self-deprecating humor can potentially take the sting out of a company blunder.

Here's how it can be done – check out the COMMENTS too!

Consumerist report - <http://tinyurl.com/mqevd5>

Here's how it's NOT done.

Rory McAlpine, VP of Maple Leaf Foods, the company responsible in 2008 for causing the death of twenty-two people as a result of listeria in tainted meat, went too far during a presentation and made a joke about his company's involvement. His audience laughed quickly, but in retrospect the humor was not funny to everyone, specifically, surviving family members.

MetroNews.ca report and video

<http://www.metronews.ca/halifax/canada/article/291693>

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6.) SEX & THE FLIPPANT SOUNDBITE

Never underestimate the power of your words.

In some situations you can get away with murder, but in others, an errant word can turn into a media relations nightmare. Lisa Raitt, Canada's Natural Resources Minister learned this the hard way.

In Raitt's case a private audiotape of her speaking was left by one of her aides in a washroom. The tape soon went public, and on it Raitt referred to the isotope shortage as a "sexy career challenge."

Most people would consider it an offhand comment and never give it a second thought, but isotopes are used to fight cancer, and consequently cancer patients were understandably offended.

We all make mistakes, and usually we apologize – immediately.

In Raitt's case though she took too long to say she was sorry.

When she did eventually apologize she shared that her father and brother had both succumbed at separate times to cancer.

The Toronto Star covered the story and called to ask my opinion of her apology. I thought it was heartfelt, genuine and effective in stemming the outrage against her. Others felt she was crying crocodile tears and I suspect they felt it was partly because Raitt took too long to get around to saying she was sorry. Even though the space was relatively short between the time the tape was made public and her apology, it gave people time to stew on what she said and they began to internalize their anger and resent her.

Read more about my comments regarding Raitt's apology –Toronto Star
<http://www.thestar.com/News/Canada/article/650333>

View Raitt's video apology here – Toronto Star
<http://www.thestar.com/videozone/648754>

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7.) TWITTER LEAKS OBAMA'S JACKASS COMMENT

I wrote about Twitter in my last newsletter, and today controversy is

swirling about the integrity of news media in respect to ABC News and a comment President Barack Obama made about entertainer Kanye West.

West jumped onstage recently during an award show and insulted Taylor Swift as she accepted an award for best video. West snatched Swift's mic during her acceptance speech and claimed Beyonce had a better video. The crowd sat stunned, including Beyonce.

A few days later ABC News employees heard an "off the record" taped conversation of Obama saying he thought West was a "jackass" and one of the employees quickly tweeted it.

Here's the rule folks - the microphone is always on.

It makes no difference whether the distribution medium is newspaper, radio, television, or Twitter. The effect is the same.

As you can imagine though, in this case almost everyone agreed with President Obama. In fact, at the writing of this newsletter more than 1,400 people commented about it on MSNBC alone.

MSNBC report - <http://tinyurl.com/qbbq32>

Actual Clip of Obama's "Off The Record" statement - YouTube
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7KMdAaaOy8>

Sequence of events including video – CTVBC report
<http://tinyurl.com/my6z4s>

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8.) OLYMPIC MEDIA TRAINING FOR PROSTITUTES

Yes, you read it right. Prostitutes in Vancouver are taking media training in preparation for the 2010 Olympics this February.

When I first read the story I was skeptical, but hey, prostitutes in Vancouver have a story to tell and media can help.

Read why prostitutes are preparing for the Olympics –CNBC report
<http://www.cnn.com/id/30888419>

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/>

I'm always interested in your comments and viewpoints.

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Jeff Ansell & Associates
69 Yorkville Avenue, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario
CANADA M5R 1B8

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