Enhancing Risk Communication Effectiveness Through Building Trust and Credibility

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Trust & Credibility in Risk Communication?
Absence of Trust & Credibility

Cynicism

Low morale

Turnover

Decreased production

Inability to gain cooperation

Lack of confidence
What is Trust?

• The debate regarding “what is trust”

• Consensus: an expectation or belief that one can rely upon another person’s actions and words and/or that person has good intentions

• Multi-dimensional

• Direct and/or moderating effects?

Dirks & Ferrin, 2001
What Then is Credibility?

- Receiver’s perception of competence or expertise combined with trustworthiness
- Conviction that everything is under control
Risk Communication

What is Risk Communication?

The process by which people become informed about safety, health and environmental risks or hazards and are influenced to make informed judgments, decisions and behaviors.

Morgan, Fischhoff, Bostrom & Atman, 2002
Safety & Health Risk Communication

- Intention: risk message
- Content: safety & health risks
- Audience: targeted
- Source: scientists and technical experts
- Flow: from experts to non-experts

Plough & Krimsky, 1987
Communication Can…

• Increase knowledge

• Increase awareness

• Influence perceptions, beliefs & attitudes that may change social norms
Communication Can…

• Prompt action

• Demonstrate skills

• Illustrate benefits of change

• Strengthen organizational relationships
Communication with other strategies…

• Cause sustained change with behavior change or adoption and maintenance of policies and programs.

• Communication alone is not a fix all safety solution.
Determinants of Trust & Credibility in Risk Communication

- Knowledge and expertise
- Openness and honesty
- Concern and care
- Commitment and dedication

Covello, 1992
Dr. Sandman’s Four Types of Risk Communication

Hazard
Technical aspect of risk

Outrage
Nontechnical, perceived threat of the hazard

Sandman (April 2003)
Types of Risk Communication

- High Hazard – Low Outrage
- Moderate Hazard – Moderate Outrage
- Low Hazard – High Outrage
- High Hazard – High Outrage

Sandman (April 2003)
High Hazard – Low Outrage

• Apathetic audience
• Focus is to increase outrage
• Interesting message, that is short, concise & accurate
• Usually few objections, concerns or audience reservations
Moderate Hazard – Moderate Outrage

- Attentive audience
- Technical explanation
- Interpersonal communication
- Listen, listen, listen
Low Hazard - High Outrage

- Audience is outraged

- Reduce outrage by acknowledging, listening, sharing control, etc.

- In-person dialogue
High Hazard – High Outrage

- Crisis Communication
- Fear and misery
- Avoid over-reassurance
- Communication directed though mass media
- Empathy and understanding
- See CDCynergy ERC @
  http://www.orau.gov/cdcynergy/erc/default.htm
Research to Practice – Tips for Practitioners

- The “asymmetric principle” lurks, so do not destroy trust
- Listen empathetically and openly
- Do not prejudge; listen, listen, listen
- Be open and honest
- Create a culture of caring
Research to Practice – Tips for Practitioners

• Acknowledge uncertainty
• Demonstrate competence and make decisions on science and relevant information
• Overconfidence as arrogance can undermine levels of trust
• Be quick to respond
• Don’t over-reassure
Questions?


Thank you for your attention.
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

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