

# City Clerks New Law and Elections Seminar

Dec. 9, 2021



LEAGUE OF  
**CALIFORNIA  
CITIES**

Strengthening California Cities  
through Advocacy and Education

## Media Engagement in Tumultuous Times

Building Trust Through Transparency and  
Powerful Storytelling

**Jill Oviatt**

Director of Communications and Marketing  
League of California Cities

# Communication: opportunity and risk

**Media interviews** are a great opportunity...

...and also pose a great risk.

How do we **maximize opportunities** and **minimize risks**.



## Preparation is key

A black and white photograph of a fountain pen nib resting on a textured surface, possibly paper or fabric. The pen is positioned diagonally from the top right towards the bottom center. The nib is sharp and pointed. The background is a fine, grainy texture. Overlaid on the image is a quote in large, white, sans-serif font.

**"By failing to prepare,  
you are preparing to fail."**

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.**

# What do journalists want?

## Newsworthy



### WHAT SELLS

**Emotion:** Drama and Conflict

Plain **spoken** language

Brevity/Clarity

Simplicity

Passionate delivery

Hot issues and trends

Localized and humanized

Audience benefit

## Avoid



### WHAT DOESN'T

**Logic:** Facts and dry data

Local government lingo  
and technical jargon

Long-winded responses

Complexity

Dull delivery

Data heavy and impersonal

Not *audience-focused*

## Tool #1 – Primary Key Message (PKM)



**WHAT'S  
YOUR  
STORY?**

## Tool #2 – TOM

- **TARGET AUDIENCE** – Who am I speaking to? Who do I want to reach?
- **OBJECTIVE** – What do I want that audience to do, say, feel, think after I have communicated with them?
- **MOTIVATION** – What does the audience care about, what motivates them, what are their concerns?



# Tool #3 – Proof Points



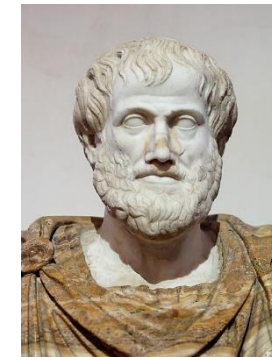
# Persuasion: not much has changed in 2,000 years

Aristotle outlined a method to master persuasion

- **Ethos** or character. In order for your audience to trust you, establish credibility.
- **Logos** or logic. Use data, evidence, and facts to support your message.
- **Pathos** or emotion. People are moved to action by how someone makes them feel. Storytelling will connect the audience to you and your idea.

*Emotional appeal to the audience*

**PATHOS**



**ETHOS**

*Credibility of the messenger*

**LOGOS**

*Logic of the message*



# Principle #1

You must play an  
**ACTIVE**  
not passive role  
in every interview  
you do.



# Principle #2

It is not the overall conversation that is important but the **OUTPUT** that matters.



# Example Output: Cal Cities interview on 2019 Auditor Report

## **Associated Press article, Oct. 24, 2019**

- The League of California Cities characterized the analysis as a data dump without context and analysis, making the rankings "irresponsible and misleading."
- "There is not a one-size-fits all template on how to run a city's finances," said Jill Oviatt, director of communications and marketing for the league. She noted the data was from 2017, and many cities have since approved new taxes and other measures to improve their finances.

## Principle #3 – Keep it short and simple (KISS)

Simplicity is complex. It's never simple to keep things simple. Simple solutions require the most advanced thinking.

————— Richie Norton —————

# Principle #4 – Always stay on message

It can be very dangerous to stray



# NEVER say “No comment.” Instead say, I can’t talk about that, because...

- Legal
- Inappropriate/unethical
- Not the right person/not the right time
- Don’t have the information/don’t know

But what I can tell you is ... and give them something similar and your top message.

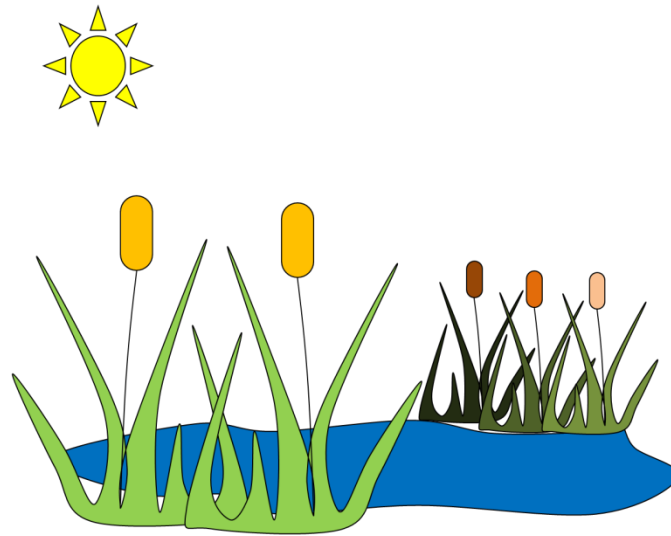
Transparency + Good and newsworthy content = Satisfied reporter

# How does this affect how we do media interviews

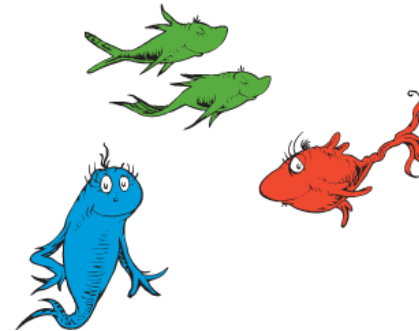
**Green Fish Good, Red Fish Bad**



**Reporter**



**Interview**



**Quotes**



**Spokesperson**

# Principle #5 – Build trust through non-verbal messaging

- Integrity
- Sincerity
- Credibility
- Confidence
- Intelligence
- Competence
- Transparency
- Trustworthiness





# Crisis communications: doing the right thing pays off

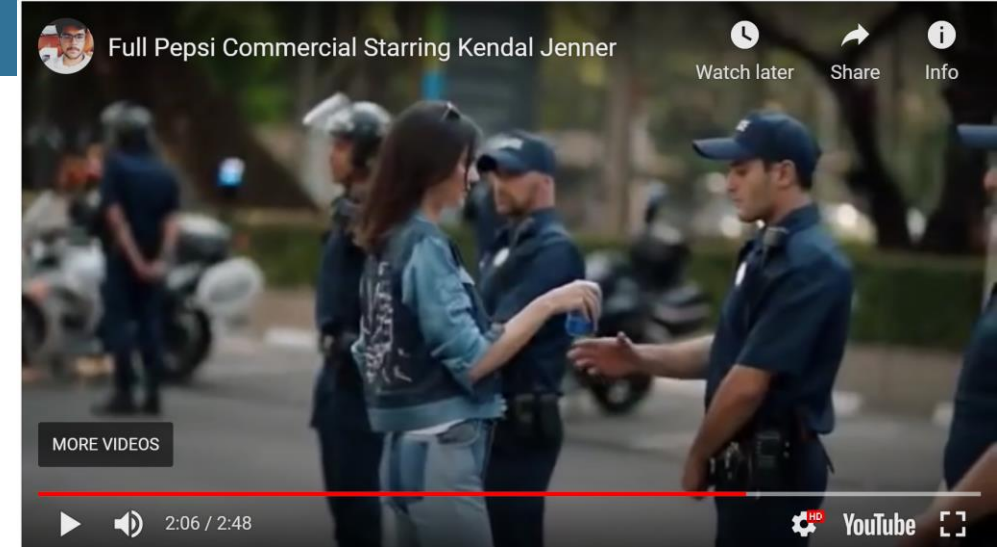
- Nurture relationships with media before a crisis strikes
- Speed and effectiveness of organization response makes a difference to public trust AND – stock prices
- Communication deemed “effective” was:
  - Accessible and prompt
  - Relatable, humanized, empathetic
  - Honest, transparent
  - Conveys action
  - Easy to understand, clear
- What and what order information is shared matters:
  - Concern, Action, Perspective (CAP)

# Pepsi-Kendall Jenner Crisis

- **2017** – PepsiCo launched “Live for Now – Moments” campaign
- Public backlash; claimed the ad trivialized Black Lives Matter protests

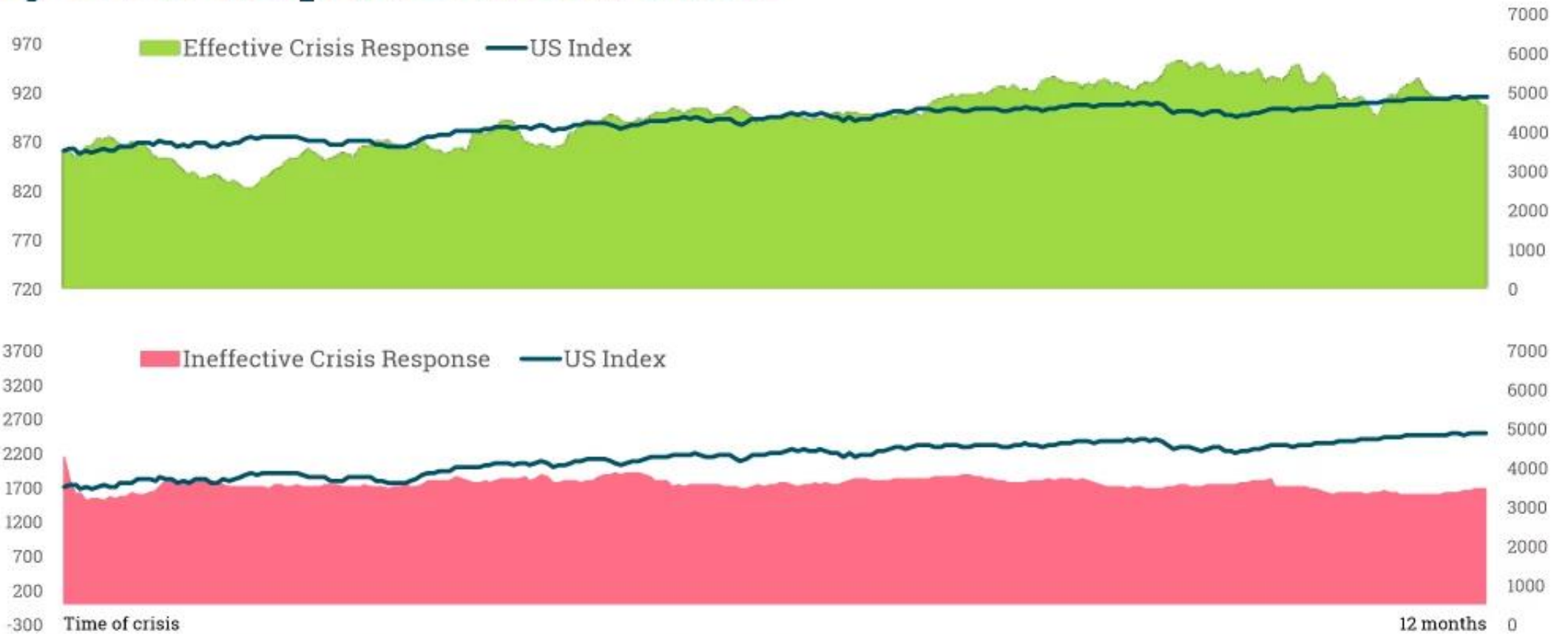
## Response

- **Concern:** apologetic and empathetic
- **Action:** advertisement was removed in less than 24 hours
- **Perspective:** trying to project global message of unity, peace, and understanding.



**Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding. Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position.**

# US Company Stock Price Trends, By Crisis Response Effectiveness



Published on MarketingCharts.com in June 2019 | Data Source: Hot Paper Lantern

Based on an analysis of 80 companies' response to 105 crises, measured via analysis of 450K articles and sentiment analysis of 85K social mentions

# Summary

- **Prepare** - Create messaging that is newsworthy with a **PKM** using the **TOM** analysis.
- Develop **Proof Points** to support **PKM**.
- **Principle 1** – Be active, not passive. Be a **Spokesperson**, not an Answer-person. Take and maintain control of your story.
- **Principle 2** – Only the output matters - respond in complete “quotes” that can stand alone, out of context.
- **Principle 3** – KISS – Keep it short and simple. Simple is hard.
- **Principle 4** – Stay “**on message.**” Constantly bring back your message, your narrative. Don’t wander – it’s NOT a conversation.
- **Principle 5** – The message is much more than words. Integrity, sincerity, credibility, and passion in your message *and delivery*, are vital.
- Especially in a crisis, **empathy, speed, clarity, honesty, and action-oriented messaging** builds trust with residents.

# #LocalWorks

- Be your own media outlet
- Tell your own stories
- *Western City* magazine
- *Cal Cities Advocate*
- City website
- City social media



December 1, 2021 | [Local Works](#) | By Alexa López

**Becoming your community's ally:**  
How the city of Hayward continues to move the equity needle by listening and learning

While Hayward had an anti-discrimination action plan in



November 1, 2021 | [Local Works](#) | [Features](#) | By Don Redmond

**Chula Vista's high-flying first responder** reduces costs and response times, improves de-escalation tactics, and saves lives

tragedies throughout the nation involving communities are asking for police reform, de-escalation tools and training. The Chula Vista Police Department, serving a population of 270,000, responded in part by developing an aerial program that can respond to emergencies and provide officers with the information needed to de-escalate situations.



October 1, 2021 | [Local Works](#) | By Brian Hendershot

**Traffic fatalities across the US rose in 2020 but not in Fremont. What did the city do differently?**

In 2015, Fremont's city council committed to a bold goal: Reduce traffic-related fatalities to zero. Even though the city was already a national leader in traffic safety, this new mindset forced officials to rethink their approach to traffic safety. Known as Vision Zero, Fremont's traffic safety focuses on integrating human error into transportation systems, instead of reducing it.

[Read more](#)



September 1, 2021 | [Local Works](#) | By Erica A. Stewart, Any Pease, and Beya Makekai

**A roadmap to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in a predominately white, affluent community**

After seeing thousands of San Luis Obispo residents march through the streets for George Floyd, the San Luis Obispo community and city council knew that more work needed to be done to create a diverse, inclusive community. While diversity and inclusivity have long been core values of the city government, it became clear that there was much more to be done.

# THANK YOU

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