

The Lustberg Communicator

Volume 18, Number 3

“Communication should be an intellectual act of love.”

Autumn 2009

Lustberg on...Ready, FIRE! Aim.



Photo by Mary Norman

Arch Lustberg

There's no motto more appropriate for spokespersons than "Be Prepared." In fact, it should be the rule any time you open your mouth to speak.

"Foot in mouth disease" and "he shot himself in the foot" are just two of many put-downs for people who speak first and think later. This was brought to mind as the media covered the Washington Metro subway crash, just after you received the previous issue of TLC.

Go back in time with me for a moment. In my early days of media training, I got a call from Harry Barley. Harry directed marketing for the very same Metro system. He brought me in to do a session with Metro's Director of Public Affairs, Beverly Silverberg.

Beverly was prepared. She'd developed a plan that simplified and pinpointed the responsibility of each participant in our one-day session of crisis management training. Her goal was to ensure that every person at Metro likely to be approached by the media would be able to give sincere, honest and appropriate answers to questions both routine and unexpected.

The session was very successful. The attendees felt a lot more comfortable knowing they weren't expected to know everything about an accident or incident or malfunction, and could only

be expected to talk about what they did know, and its effect on their department. They felt more prepared and relaxed about dealing with a possible crisis.

The results were obvious as the media covered the following delays, malfunctions, breakdowns and et ceteras that attack transportation systems. Metro employees always handled themselves well. They seemed first and foremost genuinely concerned with the safety and comfort of their riders.

But that was over 30 years ago. Harry, Beverly and Arch are long gone and forgotten by Metro. Harry has brought me to several sessions with Florida transportation systems and is now executive director of Orlando Metroplan, and Beverly has just celebrated 15 years of Beverly

Silverberg Communications.

I'm sad to say, the handling of the recent Washington Metro disaster left a lot to be desired. The element of concern was what I found most lacking in the coverage. The warmth and caring just weren't apparent. And of course, there were other problems that training would have helped eliminate: a tendency to reinforce the negative, sending the wrong signals with closed faces and awkward hand positions,

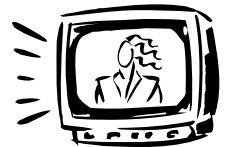
and the infernal um, um, uuuuuuh, like... y'know, *audible pauses!*

Soon after my work with Metro, I did a session with the president of Volvo North America. He then appeared on the *Today Show*, and turned a terrible question into a brilliant sales presentation for Volvo. (You can get the complete story on page 125 of my book, *How to Sell Yourself*, second edition.)

Closely following that appearance which turned out so well for Volvo, some Audi drivers began reporting a problem with their cars jumping forward when they shifted from park to neutral. The CEO's comment to the press? "Driver incompetence!"

Audi's market share collapsed immediately. I believe their sales went from about 75,000 units to something like 28,000. The reason? Untrained spokesman incompetence!

There will always be crises. Every elected or appointed official, every profession, every type of business and institution will some day have the media looking at them. Why not take the time and make the effort to help yourself and your organization look good when



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Wisdom of the Ages

I'm always impressed by the intelligence and insight that my readers bring to the newsletter. Recent issues have inspired a flood of astute comments. So for this issue, we're making our readers the wellspring of our wisdom column.

From Jack Marshall:

Great issue, Arch. Your advice about not revealing problems is a testament to your show biz roots. My favorite story: I took over the direction of a troubled production of The Roar of the Greasepaint in college, but I couldn't fix everything. Cocky's "dream girl" was fat, homely, couldn't act, sing or dance, and was surly to boot. On opening night, she came out to sing her solo in the dream sequence, started a half-tone flat and stayed there, out of tune with the orchestra, for the whole song. It was horrible. At intermission, as I was walking out to shoot myself, I heard an audience member behind me say, "And it was a particularly brilliant coup for the director to point up the delusion of Cocky's dream by having his 'dream girl' sing off-key!"



Gary Shapiro responded to two items in the summer issue:

the value of storytelling in promoting corporate values, and the importance of being trustworthy. There isn't space here for his verbatim story, but, to synopsise:

A soon-to-retire corporate CEO handed out seeds – one to each junior executive – to take home and plant in a pot. He instructed them to nurture their plants and bring them back in exactly one year: on that day, he would choose his successor. Wonderful lush plants were brought in a year later. But one

embarrassed young man brought in a pot of dirt and admitted that in spite of all his efforts, his seed never sprouted. He was immediately named the next CEO. The seeds had been sterile, and he was the only ambitious young executive honest enough to admit failure. The others were cheats, and unfit to run the company.



Rick Music wrote to caution me as I comment on the president:

I first heard you speak in 1991 and, over the years, have found many of your pointers, tips and admonitions to be well worth the effort to put them into practice. I also enjoy, very much, the issues of The Lustberg Communicator. However, I must tell you that I find your thoughts and comments in the Summer 2009 issue a bit inconsistent.

In your opening column on Likeability Plus, I applaud your position that trustworthiness is every bit as important, if not more so, than likeability and competence in appropriately delivering a message of real significance. Yet, later in the Nits & Picks, you hold up President Obama as a prime example of likeability without giving consideration to the aspects of trustworthiness or competence.

While few can argue the President's likeability factor, there are a number of good reasons to reserve judgment as to his trustworthiness and competence – both of which he has yet to demonstrate or earn in matters of real importance to our nation.

Clearly he, and his speech writers, are masters at customizing the approach to an audience, but saying what "they" want to hear without regard to what "they" need to hear, does not make for a well-delivered message.

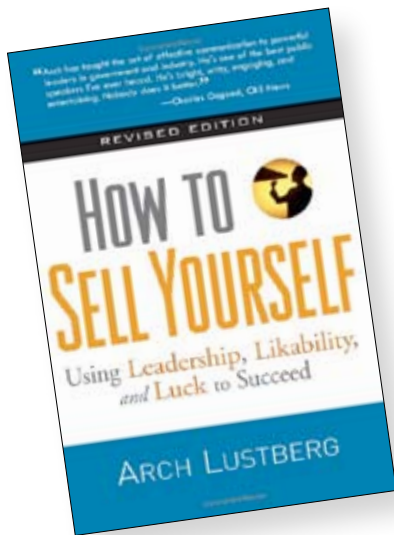
As I responded to Rick's thoughtful caveat, I agree with his comment on what he saw as the inconsistency in the likeability vs. trustworthiness of the Obama message. Quite often, the message is delivered well, scoring high likeability points, but is getting less and less trustworthy. I believe the president's approval rating is still linked to his intelligent, warm delivery, but the lack of the promised "transparency," and the similarity to what he rejected about the Bush administration (staffing insiders, banking people planning the bailouts) are beginning to crack the protective shell that likeability and the promise of "change" have built around him. Time will tell if he'll really deliver change that works. If he does, he's home free. If he doesn't, the public will see him as just another slick politician.



Tom Farley writes:

Your Likeability Plus piece was great! Adding the third leg to your communication platform – trust – is very insightful. For quite some time, I have helped to mentor/develop leaders. I use The Leadership Challenge as a practical common sense "playbook" to guide the learning process. Over 25 years, the authors' research on the open-ended question, "What values, personal traits, or characteristic do you look for and admire in a leader?" have produced strikingly similar results, showing little variance by demographics or culture. For people to willingly follow someone, they believe the leader must be honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent..

It struck me that your likeability, competence, and trust "holy trinity" of effective communication is so closely aligned with what we refer to as the credibility of a leader. But, why am I surprised that you would come up with this? □



Put Me in Your Pocket

It seems I'm making an effortless slide into the digital age. It was a delight to receive this e-mail from longtime client and friend, Bob Dean.

Hi Arch – After working with you for almost 25 years, I thought I had seen it all. On May 31, I had a new Lustberg experience. As a passionate iPhone user, I am exploring how the iPhone becomes a customized learning platform. I keep reading about Kindle, so I decided to download the Kindle application for the

iPhone. How to Sell Yourself was the first book I searched for.

I bought the book on Amazon for \$10, and it took 2 minutes to download the 2,156 page views of your electronic book. Within another minute, I was flipping the pages of your book as I learn how to use Kindle.

Congratulations! You have made another big step into the digital age. Now I can refer to your book anytime, anywhere!! ☐

Communicator TIP

TLC reader William P. Barnett shares this tip:

"I have found replaying messages I leave on voicemail systems very helpful in exposing my own failings with regard to the audible pause."



Dear Arch

Tremendous presentation. Thank you for the training I did not know I needed.

*Gregory R. Schaaf
Greenebaum Doll & McDonald PLLC*

NEW!

One-on-One Web Training

Nothing beats one-on-one training. 'Til now that's only been financially feasible for top leaders. Today, the web has made private sessions readily available and affordable. Interested? Call (703)979-4150 or e-mail lustberg@erols.com to explore the possibilities.



Bringing Arch to Town

If you're looking for feedback like these comments from a recent Lustberg presentation, contact Marguerite Savard to discuss bringing Arch to your group: lustberg@erols.com

- I found this very entertaining. I learned a lot. Well worth my time.
- This was enlightening.
- This speaker really did a great job!
- I found it very funny which makes

it easier to remember and apply. The length is perfect (not too long).

- Simply wonderful and educational. Very useful. I applied the skills immediately to current business with successful results!
- I found the course very helpful not only for business but also for life. It was a pleasure for me to take it and I am grateful of being given the opportunity.

Here's how Arch's road schedule is beginning to shape up:

September

- 15 Lexington, KY
- 16 Philadelphia, PA
- 25 Birmingham, AL*

October

- 6 Morgantown, WV
- 24 Salt Lake City, UT

November

- 21 Austin, TX

December

- 3 Orlando, FL

March

- 19 Tallahassee, FL

May

- 22 Birmingham, AL

July

- 13 Madison, WI

* This date is being held on a first-refusal basis. For updates, visit our home page: www.lustberg.net

Nits & Picks

He, um, Likes the Teleprompter

On June 11, the topic of a *Today Show* story was President Obama's teleprompter usage. It seems he's never without it. It's gotten to be a story in itself the way the screen is set up before the president speaks to any audience. The *Today Show* reporter asks, "Why is that?," and answers by following up with clip after clip of Obama's uh, uh, uh's. He's a perfectionist, the reporter explains, and was so unhappy when he saw videos of his off-the-cuff talks that he now insists on reading fluidly his comments from a screen.



The president could save some face, and the taxpayers some bucks, if someone would help him kick the audible pause addiction and teach him the mechanics of the silent pause. He's not too old a dog to learn new tricks! I'm available.

Unanchored

The Saturday morning after Walter Cronkite died, Katie Couric was interviewed on *The Early Show* to talk

about the legendary anchorman. With no teleprompter, and perhaps nervous about comparisons that might be made, her statements were rife with "um, uh, well, you know..." Cronkite was not yet in his grave, but must have been rolling over nonetheless. One remembers how Couric treated Sarah Palin when she was equally stammering in an interview with the anchorwoman.

Leader Competence

Oh! How I enjoy those who agree with me! Here's a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* by Thomas S. Bateman, a professor at the University of Virginia's McIntire School of Commerce:

Leaving aside the questions that any leadership researcher would have about David Brooks's column, let's assume the validity of the broad conclusion that execution is more important than "people skills."

Here's a straightforward way to look at leader effectiveness:

Charisma helps a leader influence other people (particularly in the short run), and sheer competence closes the deal (particularly over time). Academic research has made clear the things that confer "charisma" on a leader, including having a compelling vision, communicating it persuasively, and

giving appropriate attention to people as individuals.

Leader competence involves solving important problems and creating and capitalizing on high-potential opportunities, sometimes directly by the leader but also by motivating others to do the same. Still missing from the leadership formula are ethics and integrity – call it character, for the sake of alliteration. We then have a pretty powerful equation – competence plus charisma plus character – for outstanding leadership.

Sounds like competence, likeability and trustworthiness to me.

In Agreement, Take Two



Kathleen Parker's *Washington Post* opinion piece on the Sotomayor hearings included this paragraph:
Deny as we

might, the whole package of an individual being scrutinized for any position – from cashier to Supreme Court justice – includes appearance, personality and likeability as well as qualifications, character and intelligence. It's our nature. □

The Lustberg Communicator

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FIRE!

Continued from page 1

someone else is trying to help you look bad? You can turn a losing situation into a win if you handle the situation as a caring human being who will do everything necessary to correct a mistake, right a wrong, and make an audience feel good (or at least better) about you and the organization you represent.

You'll never regret having a sound, well-designed crisis management program and a staff trained to be their best selves when the worst happens. Be prepared. □