

# PublicityHandbook.Com: Checklist #10

## Planning for Controversy

Handling controversy is always difficult, but it can be rewarding and productive if you're prepared ahead of time. On the other hand, saying "no comment" or refusing to respond to a media controversy can do a great deal of damage because if you refuse to comment, journalists will almost certainly go to your opposition.

Here is a method for preparing for controversy in advance. First make a list of all the possible controversial issues that could embroil your organization. Then use this Work Sheet to evaluate each of them. You should put your Controversy Worksheets into a folder or binder, so they'll be ready the moment you need them.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Describe the potential for controversy:

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2. What facts and figures can you use to respond to an attack quickly?

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3. Where is additional information on this topic filed?

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4. List all the leading, difficult, tricky and nasty questions reporters could ask you about this controversial situation. Then write down your answers, show them to your organization's lawyer, and rewrite them based on his advice. Always avoid re-stating misleading and wrong information. Keep your statements positive and focussed on the facts.

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite based on lawyer's advice: \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite based on lawyer's advice: \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite based on lawyer's advice: \_\_\_\_\_

Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite based on lawyer's advice: \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: Make copies of this page for additional questions*

5. Are there any aspects of this issue your lawyer forbids you to talk about with the press?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. Is the press:

Likely to favor your position in this controversy?

Likely to take a stand against you in this controversy?

Neutral in this controversy and willing to listen?

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Who are your potential allies on this issue? If you're not sure, you may want to approach other organizations in your industry, or professional and trade associations, and get a sense of where they stand now. List the most powerful, useful allies first.

A. \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they potential allies? \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person/phone \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they potential allies? \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person/phone \_\_\_\_\_

C. \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they potential allies? \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person/phone \_\_\_\_\_

8. Which organizations or individuals are likely to attack you or be your enemies in a controversy on this issue? Do they have any hidden motives you could expose that would discredit them?

X. \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they enemies? \_\_\_\_\_

Hidden motives? \_\_\_\_\_

Y. \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they enemies? \_\_\_\_\_

Hidden motives? \_\_\_\_\_

Z. \_\_\_\_\_

Why are they enemies? \_\_\_\_\_

Hidden motives? \_\_\_\_\_

9. Will the controversy go away on its own; should you ignore it?

Yes

No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Will a response only serve to fuel the fires or reinforce wrong information?

Yes

No

Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How can you make it look like you're the initiator of the debate, even if you have been attacked?

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12. Have you discussed your organization's stance on this issue with the top executives?

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Executive's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization's stance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problems with this stance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problem resolutions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Executive's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization's stance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problems with this stance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problem resolutions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Executive's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization's stance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problems with this stance: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Problem resolutions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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