THE ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

The Lukaszewski Group
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Crisis Management, Leadership and Organizational Recovery

A guide to recognizing the ethical expectations of leaders by those who depend on them.

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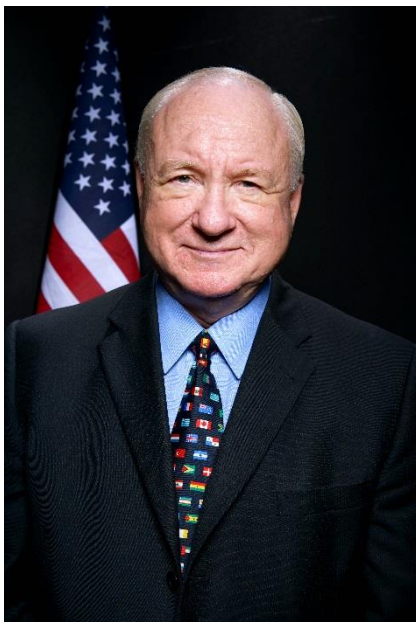
Introduction: The Greatest Ethical Leadership Responsibility of All

Jim Lukaszewski's career has engaged him in ethical leadership issues, questions and circumstances from the very beginning, going back to the early days of ethical enforcement in the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA).

In 1992, he was appointed to the PRSA National Board of Ethics and Professional Standards (BEPS), first as a member, then as Co-Chair, from 2004-2014. He was one of a team of BEPS members led by Bob Frause, APR, Fellow PRSA from Seattle who rewrote the PRSA Code of Ethics between 1996 and 2000, when the new Code was approved unanimously by the PRSA National Assembly.



His primary interests lie in helping organizations and leaders manage crises, along with the career impacts crises impose on leaders. Ethics always plays a role in these circumstances, often very openly and dramatically. Throughout this process, Jim is an observant analyst of those affected by adverse circumstances and continuously works to help everyone understand the powerful force ethics can be on business and daily life.

His fundamental philosophy in crisis communications is that success relies on behavior strategies that are simple, sensible, constructive, positive, helpful to everyone concerned, and ethically appropriate.

It is with this kind of thinking and intention in mind that he has created this guidebook for leaders, to understand what their followers, constituents, stakeholders and others with an interest in solving ethical problems expect of organizational leadership.

The place to begin now, is with the greatest ethical leadership responsibility of all. In my life, two important realities have been the most crucial revelations about ethics:

on James E. Lukaszewski, *ABC, Fellow IABC, APR, Fellow PRSA, BEPS Emeritus*

Introduction: The Greatest Ethical Leadership Responsibility of All

1. The highest level of ethical clarity in a person's life seems to occur between the ages of 19 and 26. This seems to be a time when an individual knows everything - more than anybody else, including their parents, their teachers, anybody. The world seems to be largely black and white. Parents enter the NPR zone (Not Presently Relevant) around age 15 for girls and age 17 for boys . . . boys are always slower.

2. It is between the ages of 30 to 49 -- that time when one's career begins to move ahead, even take off -- that we begin moving through a period of incremental de-ethicization, meaning regularly making small compromises to facilitate the personal advancement process. It seems as though one's career progress requires that many clear and sharp decisions we made in the past are now gently, minutely and continuously modified.

The greatest ethical leadership responsibility of all is to recognize, talk about, counteract, and lead those whose careers are advancing through this period with as much of their ethical belief structure intact.

Most ethical structures rely on the participants to report, on the participants to comply, on the participants to raise questions. This is often the Achilles heel of ethics programs given the fact that it is *silence* that perpetuates unethical behavior and unethical aspirations.

Leaders must break this silence and help those who are advancing to move ahead constructively, purposefully, competently, and ethically.

The obligation to preserve an ethical framework on the pathway to the top is a non-delegable responsibility of leaders.

This very brief, but intense set of thoughts about ethics and leadership is designed to foster internal discussion, consideration and deliberation to bring leadership together with those who depend on that leadership, to apply ethical standards and norms to the most adverse circumstances imaginable.

THE ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Leaders must implicitly and explicitly recognize the ethical expectations by everyone inside their organization. Focus groups, polls and interviews reveal a general list of ethical expectations:

1. Find the truth as soon as possible: Tell that truth and act on it promptly.

2. Promptly raise the tough questions and answer them thoughtfully: This includes asking and answering questions yet to be asked or thought of by those who will be affected by whatever the circumstance is.

3. Teach by parable: Emphasizing wrong-way/right-way options.

4. Vocalize core business values and ideals constantly: Most core values are a set of ideas thought up on a management golf outing, brought in on the back of a clubhouse napkin, then printed and posted without another word being spoken. The values and ideals of a business are what employees and others bring to work every day.

5. Walk the talk: Be accessible; help people understand the organization within the context of its values and ideals at every opportunity.

6. Help, expect and enforce ethical leadership: People are watching; people are counting; people know when there are lapses in ethics causing trust to be broken. When bad things happen in good organizations, it's those occasional lapses that deepen the troubles.

7. Preserve, protect, defend and foster ethical pathways to the top of the organization: Constantly identify, explain, explore and warn about situations where ethical processes can be compromised on the way, especially among executives who are on upward career trajectories.

8. Be a cheerleader, model and teacher of ethical behavior: Ethical behavior builds and maintains trust. In fact, to have trust in an organization requires that its leaders act ethically constantly.

9. Make values more important than profits: Most people seem to enjoy working more when they are with organizations they respect, people they trust and leadership they can rely on. Wherever you find an organization or company that puts values on the same level as profits, there is often even more loyalty and support because companies who do this sacrifice profits for principle. Everybody notices.

LEADERHIP RECOVERY FOLLOWING DAMAGING SITUATIONS: SIX STRATEGIES

There is a definite pattern of recovery behaviors that helps leadership reestablish trust following a trust-busting, reputation-redefining circumstance. The message is, when these situations occur, get the following recovery strategies working immediately, and things will get better fairly quickly.

1. Stop producing victims and critics: Change your behavior; change your language; change your vocabulary, and recognize the power victims have to further damage your reputation and trusted relationships.

2. Build followerships: Reconnect, reestablish and reconvene those who are critical to building your leadership and trust.

3. Build trust at every opportunity: Trust is a behavior; trust must be vocalized, and trust must be explained and expected.

4. Rebuild and maintain your base: Focus on those closest to you – employees, retirees, their families – as well as those with who the organization has relationships.

5. Manage the victim dimension: Victims and critics live forever. They are always with you. Pay attention to them, literally, for the rest of their lives. Failure to do this often reignites their victimization, their criticisms and your untrustworthiness.

6. Manage your own destiny: Everything said, written, broadcast or otherwise created about you and your organization lives forever. You need a strategy to correct, clarify and comment on these things. Failure to manage your own destiny leaves it to somebody else who is ready to do it for you.

Your management recovery mantra: If it's simple, sensible, sincere, constructive and positive, do it now. Forget the rest.

FOSTERING TRUST

My world is one of organizational trouble and troubled leadership. One of the serious collateral damages to trouble is trust loss in leadership. I define trust as the absence of fear because when trust is severely damaged or gone, it is replaced by fear, uncertainty and doubt. There is a strategy for sustaining trust which is sensible, constructive, purposeful and effective, but requires the systematic participation and example through communication behavior by leadership:

1. Provide advance information: This is the fundamental building block of trust. Who trusts someone who gives us key information after we needed it?

2. Ask for input: Troubled leadership often has so much on their plate they resist seeking other views, especially internally. Ask for input, rebuild trust in return.

3. Relentlessly answer questions: Answering questions is the first requirement of leadership integrity. Answering questions is the most powerful tool leadership has to build trust. Questions answered settle people down. Questions answered help people refocus on what's important.

4. Really listen: Demonstrate that you have heard. Make meaningful changes in what you've planned to do. It's an extraordinary trust booster.

5. Stay in touch: Most problem remediation strategies emphasize forgetting. Rebuilding trust requires that we remember.

6. Speak their language: Tell stories that illustrate the behaviors expected of everyone including leadership.

7. Bring them into the decision-making process: Especially the victimized or otherwise harmed. These people need a platform to talk about their pain and suffering and who caused it. The result is trust or neutrality rather than anger and contention.

TRUST-BUILDING
LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS

Failure to build trust in an organization is a function of leadership communication failure about the principles, ideals and purposes of having a trustable company, trustable products and trustable people. Here is the profile of how a trust-building leadership communication strategy should be structured:

1. Decision making: Deciding those things which make up the ingredients of an environment of trust – 5%.

2. Articulating those things decided: in the context of trust and integrity – 40%.

3. Coaching / Teaching / Motivating: Making trust, integrity, honesty and truthfulness come alive in the organization – 40%.

4. Forecasting the future impact/benefits of being a trusted organization – 5%.

5. Reputation Repair / Empathy, Apology: These are actions that enhance, ennoble or reestablish and rebuild trust – 1%, if things are going well, maybe 100% or more if there is trouble.

6. Repeating, Reemphasizing, Reinterpreting: Develop the stories, the anecdotes, the examples and the illustrations that help people understand what trust is about, what any key idea is about for that matter – 20%.

Total = 111% *

*The math is correct because the trust building communication job of a leader is close to 24/7. Anyone who does anything on a 24/7 basis is, by definition, doing substantially more than any peer in a non-leadership position. The work of leadership is always greater than almost any other work that needs to be done in an organization.

LEXICON OF TRUST

Often one of the most serious ongoing challenges to building trust and ensuring positive relationships with customers, allies, colleagues, government, and employees is what it takes to establish trust in the first place. It is by far easier to recognize the pattern of those behaviors and attitudes that damage trust, or at least bring credibility into question. Put in a more interesting way, trust is a fragile magical substance like the lignin in trees – it's the glue that holds the fiber of relationships together. Trust is the most fragile and vulnerable agent in a relationship.

Here is the Lexicon of Trust Building Concepts:

1. Trust: Generally the absence of fear; that feeling of reliability and that adverse situations, pain or mistakes have less impact or can be pre-empted if there is a trusted relationship.

2. Candor: Truth with an attitude delivered very promptly. Truth plus the facts, truth plus some perspective, truth that reflects the value of other observations on the same set of circumstances and facts.

3. Credibility: Always conferred by others on those whose past behavior, track record and accomplishments warrant it.

4. Integrity*:* Uncompromising adherence to a code of values by people, products, companies, with the attributes of credibility, candor and sincerity.

5. Sympathy: The ongoing, often continuous, verbalization of regret, embarrassment or personal humiliation, promptly conveyed, i.e., feeling truly sorry for someone who is experiencing pain, but stopping short of taking on that pain.

6. Empathy: Actions that speak louder than words ever can convey.

TRUST BUSTERS

Trust is fragile. Experience demonstrates that a bond of trust, once broken generally makes re-establishing a relationship tougher. The challenge is to identify those behaviors and attitudes to avoid that can fracture the bond of trust. These examples are generally pretty obvious, yet happen far too often:

The Lexicon of Trust Busters

1. Arrogance: The absence of empathy. Taking action without consulting those directly or indirectly affected. Making decisions unilaterally, without important input from key partners.

2. Broken Promises: One of the crucial bases of trust is that each party can rely on the commitments of the other, both implied and explicit. When those commitments are broken without prior notification, understanding, explanation and warning, the first element of the relationship to suffer is trust. Losing the safety of commitment can call into question most other elements of the relationship as well.

3. Chest Beating: The mindless, needless and useless flogging of reputation achievements. Unwarranted self-congratulatory, self-validating behavior puts distance between those who want to be trusted and those who need to trust. It is a form of self-deception through self-talk.

4. Creating Fear: This usually occurs when something you do damages or threatens to damage someone's core values without their permission, knowledge, or participation. It could be the appearance of deception; it could be the feeling of unreliability in the relationship.

5. Deception: Misleading intentionally through omission, commission, negligence or incompetence. In a relationship, deception creates a feeling of separation and distance. Deception also creates a sense of disappointment because the individual, product, company or organization failed to recognize that, at the very least, there should be a sense of candor between the parties no matter what the circumstance.

6. Denial: When mistakes are made, errors in judgment occur, a product under-performs or there is a negative surprise, failing to promptly come forward and relate the circumstances candidly, with empathy for those who are affected, changes a relationship of trust into one of suspicion and caution.

TRUST BUSTERS

7. Disparagement: Any time you hear the phrase, "They have their own agenda," or "He's uninformed," or "They're just looking to raise money by their action," or "It's politically motivated," or "They just don't understand," you immediately suspect that the exact opposite is true, and you're likely to be right. All critics and opponents have friends elsewhere. Some of those friends are your friends as well. Victory is never achieved through disparagement. Disparagement causes suspicion, damages relationships and creates permanent critics. Enemies accumulate.

8. Disrespect: Even adversaries can trust each other, to some extent, if there is respect. When an individual, product or organization is minimized, trivialized or humiliated, there is a sense of uneasiness and discomfort that leads to frustration, anger and public negative response.

9. Ducking Responsibility: In the old days, a major incident or accident triggered a company to send a crew to paint or cover over its company logo and name. Today, the ambulance attendant has already videotaped and uploaded the scene before helping the victims. Responsibility is tough to duck.

10. Failure to Seek Forgiveness or to Apologize: Often even the best public and private approaches are diminished in value when – either for reasons of arrogance or stubbornness – a direct, overt approach for seeking forgiveness from the parties harmed or indirectly affected is avoided. Failure to quickly say, "We're sorry," diminishes trust and leads to litigation.

11. Holding Back: The essence of trust is having information before it's needed so that whatever what happens, those in the relationship can count on the behaviors and attitudes of others. Deliberately withholding support, withholding admiration, withholding cooperation and collaboration, but especially withholding information, corrodes trust.

12. Lies: Often starting with simple misunderstandings, the truth to one individual or organization can easily seem untruthful to a victim, competitor, critic or angry neighbor. Truth can be complicated and emotional.

TRUST BUSTERS

13. Minimizing Danger: The moment you hear the phrase, "It's just an isolated incident," or "It's one in a million," instinctively you know it is probably just the reverse. The phrase, "It's old news," tells you instantly that something based on old circumstances is about to become new and adverse. Or the phrase, "They're just troublemakers or disgruntled employees," makes you become uneasy. We trust people who appropriately characterize situations and avoid hurting people.

14. Negative Surprise: Taking action out of character, out of sequence, out of selfish opportunity or simply without advance notice to those directly or indirectly affected can seriously damage the relationship of trust and cause a loss of confidence. Surprise implies guilt or cover-up.

15. Stall, Delay: A great source of frustration is when it's obvious that a situation could be resolved easily and quickly, but isn't. Procrastination and denial go hand-in-hand. Keep in mind one of the great axioms of military strategy: timidity, hesitation and indecision are the basic ingredients for defeat.

16. Underrate Negative Emotion: The more we adversely affect others' perceptions, lifestyles, or expectations in negative ways, the more likely they are to react emotionally and negatively. The relationship of trust can mitigate only so much potential damage from negative circumstances.

17. Overrate Your Preparation: One serious threat to trust is the assumption of being adequately prepared to manage adverse situations that can negatively affect others. Leaders are notoriously over-optimistic about readiness.

18. Self-Forgiveness: Self-talk designed to ignore reality. Symptoms of self-forgiveness include self-serving phrases like "Mistakes can happen, even to the best companies." "We've been paying taxes in this community for decades." "I didn't know what was going on." "No one told me." "We're only human." "People make mistakes." Self-forgiveness destroys trust.

19. Victim Confusion: An irritable reaction to reporters, employees, angry neighbors, and victims' families when they call asking for help, information, explanation or apology, they get: "We've been a good corporate citizen," "We've contributed to the opera, the little league, the shelter program," and "We don't deserve to be treated badly." "Hey! We're victims, too." These behaviors are an attack on the credibility and honesty of real victims. It's very accusatory and destructive.

10 WAYS TO LOSE TRUST & CREDIBILITY

There are many simple, silly ways an individual, organization, product or institution can lose trust and credibility. Much of my career has been spent identifying these behaviors, pointing them out and helping organizations and individuals find ways to avoid things that hurt so easily, so deeply and so permanently.

You might find this list helpful in simply predicting the kinds of behaviors that can lead to devastating, trust-busting activities.

1. Don't involve people in decisions. Suspicions grow and become unstoppable.

2. Hold on to information. The #1 trust-buster in any relationship.

3. Ignore people's feelings. Truth is 15% facts and data and 85% emotion and the viewer's point of reference. Feelings matter.

4. Don't follow up. We send an email and do nothing.

5. Deny mistakes. Denial is management and leadership on the run. Everybody knows and notices.

6. If you don't know the answer, fake it or duck it. Somebody always knows and speaks up.

7. Use big words. Many smart people believe that if you can't understand a complicated concept, you don't matter. Pretty dangerous, dumb, arrogant thinking.

8. Be a bureaucrat. Require receipts, demand documentation, erect barriers.

9. Delay talking to other organizations. Those you fail to tell quickly become critics and enemies. They used to be your friends, coworkers and advocates.

10. Send the engineers. Management believes that facts and data are where the truth lies. The data is used to demonstrate the ignorance of the audience. Making people look dumb doesn't build trust.

A TRUST & CREDIBILITY MANIFESTO FOR LEADERS & ORGANIZERS

A manifesto is generally a document that contains language to motivate, activate, energize and inspire appropriate, productive and useful action. When it comes to credibility and trust, the fundamental behavior of an organization reflects its leadership and the leadership's commitment to trustable behavior.

Management's Credibility Mantra: Credibility is Conferred on Us Based on Our Past Behavior.

This document contains six actionable tasks or assignments, which if executed by everyone in the organization, but especially by leadership, will foster trust and credibility, as well as demonstrate extraordinary integrity.

- "When problems occur, we'll be prepared to talk openly about them and act quickly to respond to them operationally."

- "If the public should know about an issue or problem which could affect them, we will voluntarily talk about it as quickly and as completely as we can."

- "When problems or changes occur, we will keep the community posted on a schedule they set until the problem or changes have been thoroughly explained or resolved."

- "We will answer any questions the community may have and suggest and volunteer additional information on matters the community hasn't yet asked questions about."

- "We will be cooperative with the news media, but our primary responsibility is to communicate directly with those most directly affected by our actions as soon as possible."

- "We will respect and seek to work with those who oppose us."

DESTRUCTIVE LANGUAGE DECIMATES TRUST

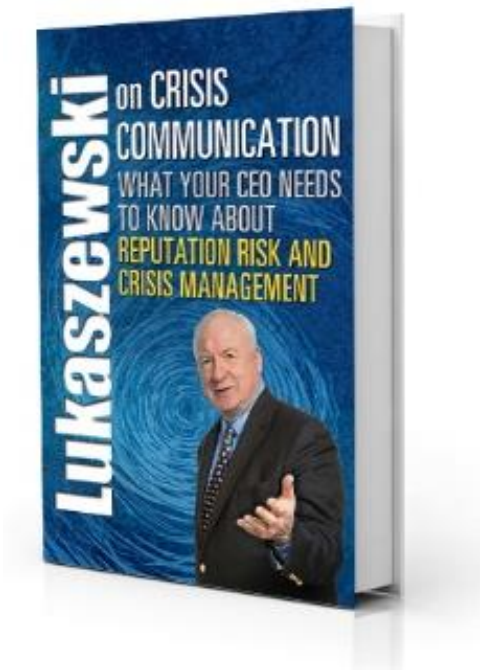
Leadership language choices in difficult situations are often early indicators of the dysfunctional nature of leadership. In fact, their behaviors and language choices are often diagnostic of this dysfunction. Here are some examples to watch for:

- Abuse
- Accusations
- Arrogance
- Baiting
- Belittling
- Blaming
- Bullying
- Callousness
- Carelessness
- Confrontation
- Contention
- Deceptiveness
- Demeaning
- Denial
- Denigration
- Discrediting
- Disdaining
- Dismissiveness
- Disparagement
- Disrespect
- Disdain
- Embarrassing
- Exclusionary
- Fearful
- Humiliation
- Intimidation
- Lies
- Minimizing
- Negligence
- Ridicule
- Sarcasm
- Shame
- Surprise (Negative)

Not only do these behaviors, attitudes and language choices destroy trust, they create victims, critics and angry people, families and organizations. Victims, critics and people who feel victimized live forever and are always waiting for an opportunity to get even.

The #1 imperative of successful organizational institutional relationships is to prevent the production of critics, victims and angry people. Anyone who does this for any reason needs to be sequestered from public contact.

These negative examples are enormously time wasting, often trigger similar even more emotionally negative responses in return, foster contentiousness, confrontation, contempt, confusion and consternation. These behavior choices are corrosive to trust.



Time matters.

Your reputation and your job are on the line. It's a career-defining moment – your destiny is in your hands. Fail to manage it, and someone else – *the victims* – will!

In this industry-defining book on crisis management and leadership recovery, Jim Lukaszewski jump-starts the discussion by clearly differentiating a crisis from other business interruption events and introduces a concept rarely dealt with in crisis communication and operational response planning: *managing the victim dimension of crisis.*

Delivered in his straight-talking style backed with compelling case studies, ***Lukaszewski On Crisis Communication*** is your guide to preparing for a crisis and the explosive visibility that comes with it.

In 10 chapters of field-tested how-to's and to-do's Lukaszewski teaches you:

- How crises create *victims*;
- To avoid the toxicity of *silence*;
- To overcome the abusive, intrusive and coercive behavior of bloviators, bellyachers, back-bench bitchers, the media, activists and critics;
- To drive attorneys to *settle* instead of *litigate*;
- *Apology* is the atomic energy of empathy;
- Simple, sensible, sincere, constructive, positive techniques to reduce contention.

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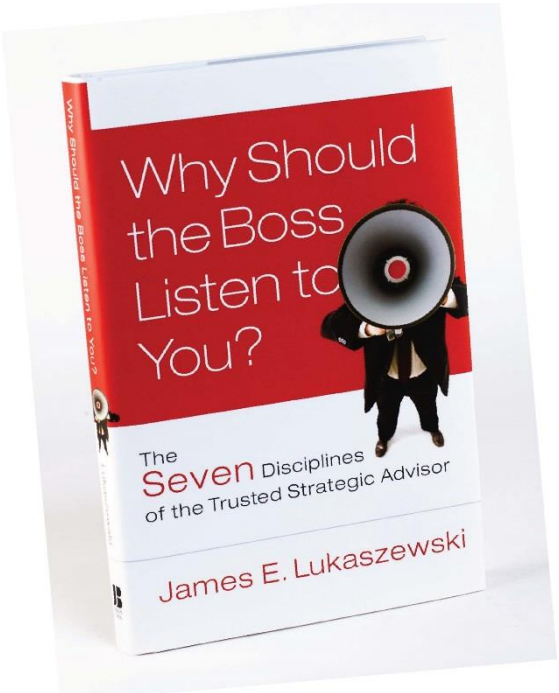
Are you a trusted advisor?



- ***Do people hold up meetings waiting for you?***
- ***Do people remember what you say and quote you to others?***
- ***Do others seek out your opinion and ideas?***
- ***Do they try to influence you to influence your boss?***

"Leaders must have trusted advisors. This book shows you how to be one and stay one."

-- Harvey B. Mackay, author of the *New York Times* #1 bestseller *Swim with the Sharks without Being Eaten Alive*

"Jim Lukaszewski has personally helped resolve more corporate crises than anyone I know of. His experience 'in the trenches' equals the high quality of his judgement."

-- Chester Burger, *APR, Fellow PRSA,* American Public Relations Leader Emeritus and PRSA Gold Anvil Winner

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