MOOC: Risk communication

R!SK NET

Week 2

General tips for risk communication

Developed by: Audronė Telešienė©

With special thanks to Eimantė Zolubienė

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Want to start communicating risk?   R ! S K **N E T**

Typical questions to answer:

1. Who is your target? What are your audiences? Who is to speak?
2. How can you do it? What are the means?
3. What is the content? Rhetoric? Audio-Visuals?
4. When the message should be released? When should it reach the audience?
5. Where will you put the message? Where your audiences will find it?
6. Why are you doing this? What is your ultimate goal? Does it comply with ethics? What is the impact?

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R ! S K **N E T**

Who is your target? What are your audiences? Who is to speak?

- Think of multiple audiences
- Think of how different they are in terms of knowledge, interests, habits of communication, etc.
- Think of who will be the heroes, victims, trustees, witnesses, sources of information, etc.

→ Learn about the audiences in the following week

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the HOW

R!S K N E T

How can you do it? What are the means?

- Think of multiple genres and forms of making a message

- Think of what would be best to convey your ideas

→ Learn about it in the following week (on drafting messages)

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the WHAT

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What is the content? Rhetoric? Audio-Visuals?

- Think of what you want to say
- Try using „frames" or typical „storylines"
- Choose/make the needed textual, visual or audio content

→ Learn about it in the following week (on drafting messages)

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the WHEN

R ! S K **N E T**

When the message should be released? When should it reach the audience?

- When are your audiences available/open for engagement?
- When your audience is under risk and needs to be alarmed?

- Think of best timing, e.g. for FB Posting, Tweeting

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the WHERE

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Where will you put the message? Where your audiences will find it?

- Think about different channels and places
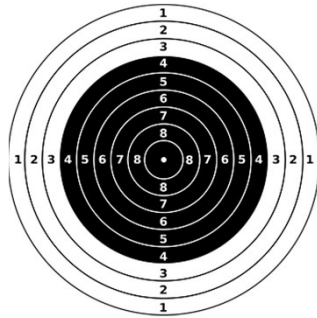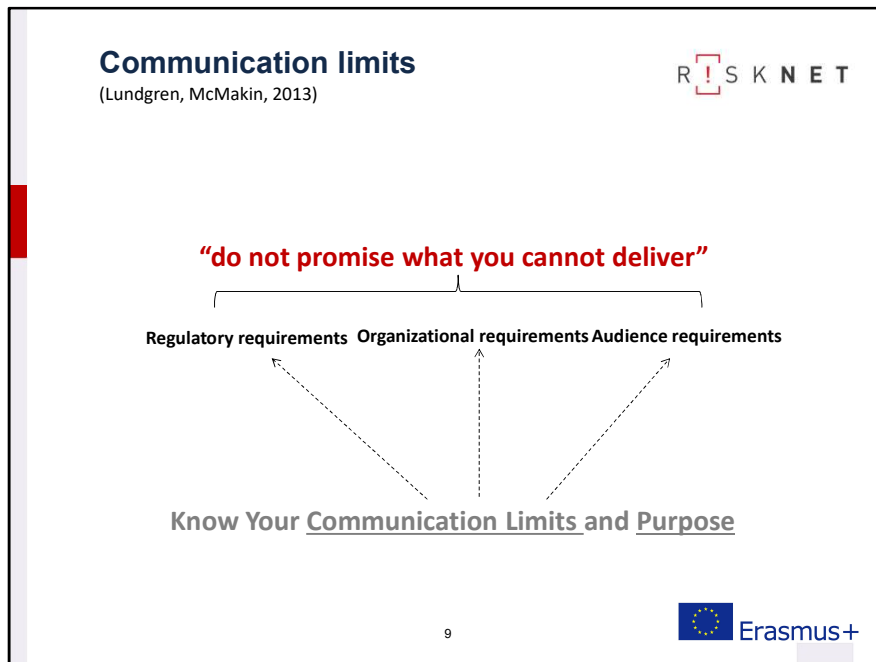- *Think of best timing, e.g. for FB Posting, Tweeting*

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the WHY

**Why are you doing this? What is your ultimate
goal?**

- Does it comply with ethics?
- What is the impact of your communication?

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Communication limits
(Lundgren, McMakin, 2013)

R ! S K N E T

"do not promise what you cannot deliver"

Regulatory requirements   Organizational requirements Audience requirements

Know Your Communication Limits and Purpose

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Principles of process relate to the process of planning and conducting a risk communication effort. They are ways of setting up the risk communication process that help ensure that the effort achieves its objectives.

To effectively communicate risk, you must know why you are communicating and any limitations to your ability to communicate risk. Your communication limits may be defined by:
• **Regulatory requirements.** For example, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency specifies what community relations activities are to be conducted for Superfund cleanup sites.
• **Organizational requirements.** For example, some organizations cannot allow preliminary risk data to be released for proprietary reasons.
• **Audience requirements.** For example, some members of the audience may have difficulty in reading or processing information.

Another way to think about this principle is "do not promise what you cannot deliver." Define the audience's role at the beginning of the process and frequently thereafter so that both the audience and your organization know what to expect. If you and your audience understand why you are communicating about the risk and the limits to that

communication, you will be less likely to promise what you cannot deliver, and they will be less likely to demand a bigger role than they can legally have.

Read more in R. E. Lundgren, A. H. McMakin (2013). Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks. Publisher: Wiley-IEEE Press, 6 chapter.

Audience analysis should be part of every effort to communicate risk. Factors such as reading level, knowledge of the subject, and level of hostility must be considered if risk is to be communicated effectively. Whenever possible, however, the message should also be pretested, reviewed by a group representing the intended audience, before dissemination, to determine that the audience analysis information was correct and that the risk message achieves the desired results. Pretest even before the message is designed by asking your potential audience about issues to be covered, concerns to be addressed, and levels of information needed.

This principle has two aspects: timing of communication and amount of information released. Risk communication must be timed to involve the audience throughout the process, not only during a crisis or once in the life of a project. As mentioned previously, many members of the audience will expect to be involved from the beginning. In fact, many will consider such involvement as their right. Denying them this opportunity will increase hostility and make risk communication more difficult. Read more in R. E. Lundgren, A. H. McMakin (2013). Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks. Publisher: Wiley-IEEE Press, 6 chapter.

This principle can be difficult for some technical experts to apply. To them, reality is built on carefully constructed, tested, scientific truths, not someone's possibly uninformed
perceptions. The moral: risk assessments and subsequent decisions are not based on the technical aspects of the risk alone. Audience perceptions and concerns must be considered if risk decisions, and their communication, are to be successful. Read more in R. E. Lundgren, A. H. McMakin (2013). Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks. Publisher: Wiley-IEEE Press, 6 chapter.

Thank you!

PLEASE FOLLOW FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS WEEK

Sources

R ! S K **N E T**

- R. E. Lundgren, A. H. McMakin (2013). Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks. Publisher: Wiley-IEEE Press.

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