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COMMUNICATIONS

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## American Meat Science Association

Did they hear what you  
thought you said?  
*Communicating in  
the age of  
the science illiterate*

September 16, 2015

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# INTRODUCTIONS





YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH



# Defining the Audience

# American Consumers

More than 98%  
of the population  
has little  
connection to or  
knowledge of  
how food is  
produced



# The Igno-Americans

- 2015 Pew Research Report
  - 79% of the 2,000 adults surveyed think science has 'made life easier for most people'
  - 71% think that investment in science ultimately pays off
  - 88% of scientists say GMO foods are 'generally safe' to eat; 37% of the public agrees
  - 86% of scientists believe vaccines should be required in childhood; 68% of the public agrees

# Your Audiences

- Consumers
  - Advocate/Critic/ Ambivalent
- Other scientists
- Students
- Board of directors
- Government officials
- Funding sources
- Stakeholders

# Tailoring Communications

- Define your role
- Define audience needs
- Determine the audience benefits
- Provide the context to fit
- Adjust your delivery





# A Focus on the Message

## A 'Message' Is:

Phrases that help an audience understand a topic from the sender's point of view





# Communication Imperatives

Know your audience

Be simple and straightforward

Do not be condescending

Actively tell your story

‘Paint’ a picture



Milk

Eggs

Dog food

Shrimp

Oranges

Kleenex

Asparagus

Pork chops

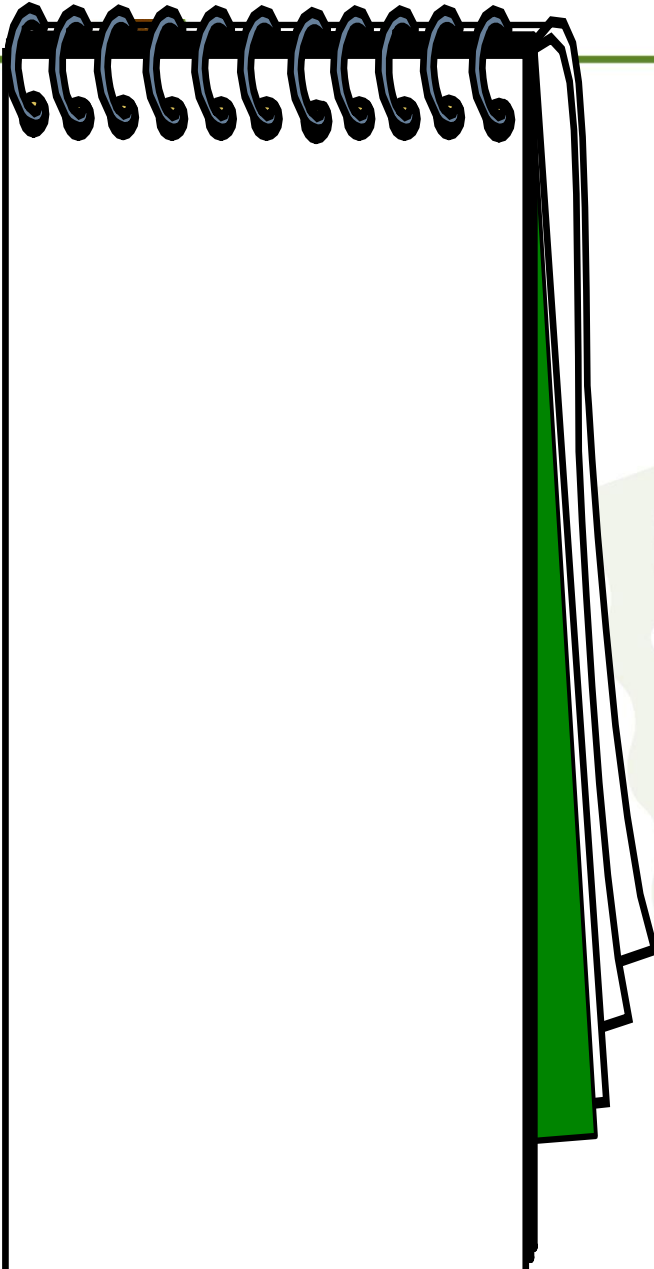
Tomatoes

Butter

Edamame

- KISS: The short-term memory can only handle about 4 chunks of information at a time.

– *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 2001*

- 
- The short-term memory can only handle about 4 chunks of information at a time.

– *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 2001*



# A Focus on the Media

# Media Trends to Watch in 2015

## Move to mobile compatibility

- Short, fast snippets of news
- Traditional outlets are restructuring
- More news on mobile devices





# Media Trends to Watch in 2015

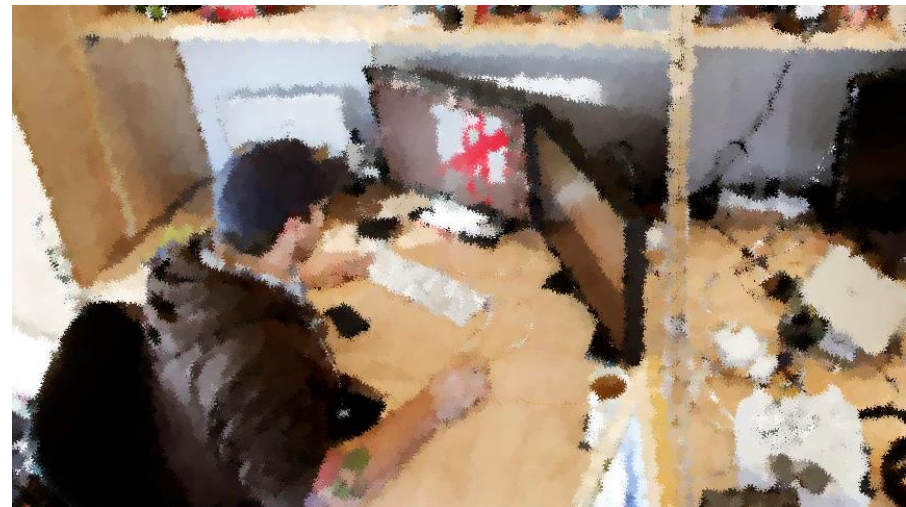
Send a picture or video for a pitch  
– 73% of reporters want pitch plus graphics



# Media Trends to Watch in 2015

## Freelancers in the newsroom

- Hired for short-term projects
- Journalists creating own brands
- Focus on people over publication



# A few additional thoughts: Newspapers

- More local news and hyper-local websites
  - Community participation such as local bloggers
- Print + online business models with paywalls
- Smaller and younger editorial staffs

\*Vocus Media Research Group

## A few additional thoughts: Television

- Expect more investigative stories
  - 40 investigative television journalists added to database\*
  - Comcast-NBC Universal merger requires stations in its 10 major markets to partner with local non-profit organizations
- Growth into Hispanic markets
  - CNNenEspañol.com    Fox News Latino    NBCLatino.com
- Resource-sharing between newsrooms
  - 175 'duopolies'\*
- Using Internet to serve up in-depth reports

\*Vocus Media Research Group

# A few additional thoughts: Radio

- Proven survivor
  - About 90% of U.S. population listens to radio
- About 40% listen on digital services
- 72% listen to AM/FM radio outside the home
- Country still #1 format
  - New/talk/information follows
- Success means:
  - AM/FM and HD
  - Website and SNS presence
  - Streaming audio
  - Email and text alerts
  - Mobile apps

\*Arbitron 2014

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# Your Role in the Media Community

- Be part of the conversation
- Follow reporters, bloggers, etc.
- Establish yourself as a credible source
  - Help create emotionally compelling stories
- Your social media presence is an extension of your business persona
- Use public and private conversations appropriately



# Tools and Techniques

# When the Phone Rings or When You Get the Email...

*Ask questions before you answer!*

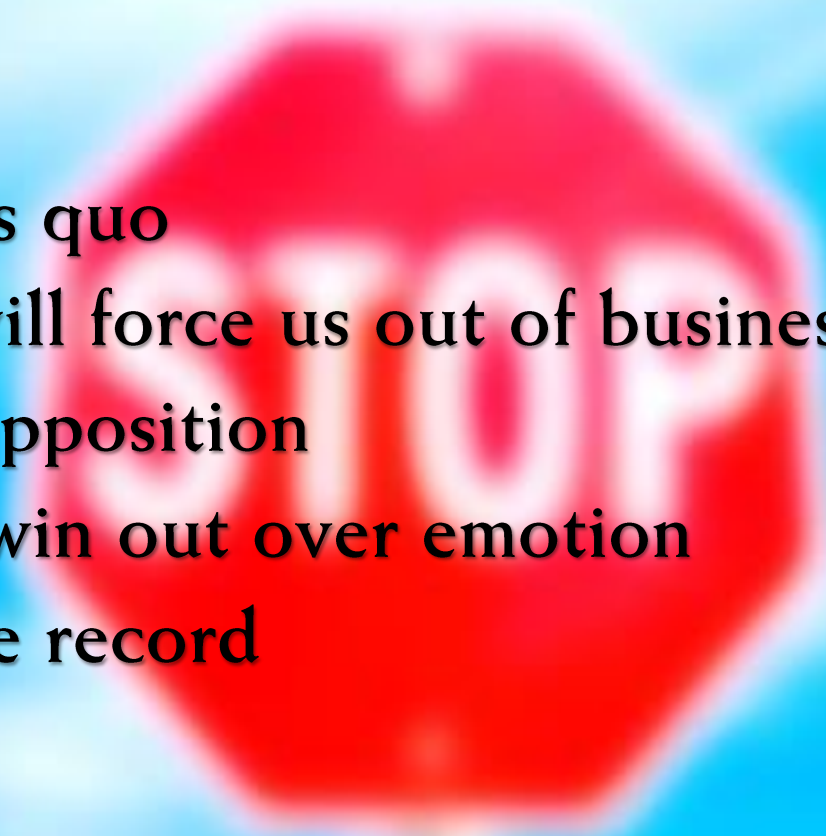
- Why are you contacting me?
- What is the subject or issue of the story?
- What questions do you want to ask me?
- Who else have you interviewed or plan to interview?
- What information do you have on the subject?
- What's your deadline?





# Approaches to Avoid

- Defending the status quo
- Concerns/changes will force us out of business
- Discrediting peers/opposition
- Science will always win out over emotion
- No comment, off the record
- Personal opinions

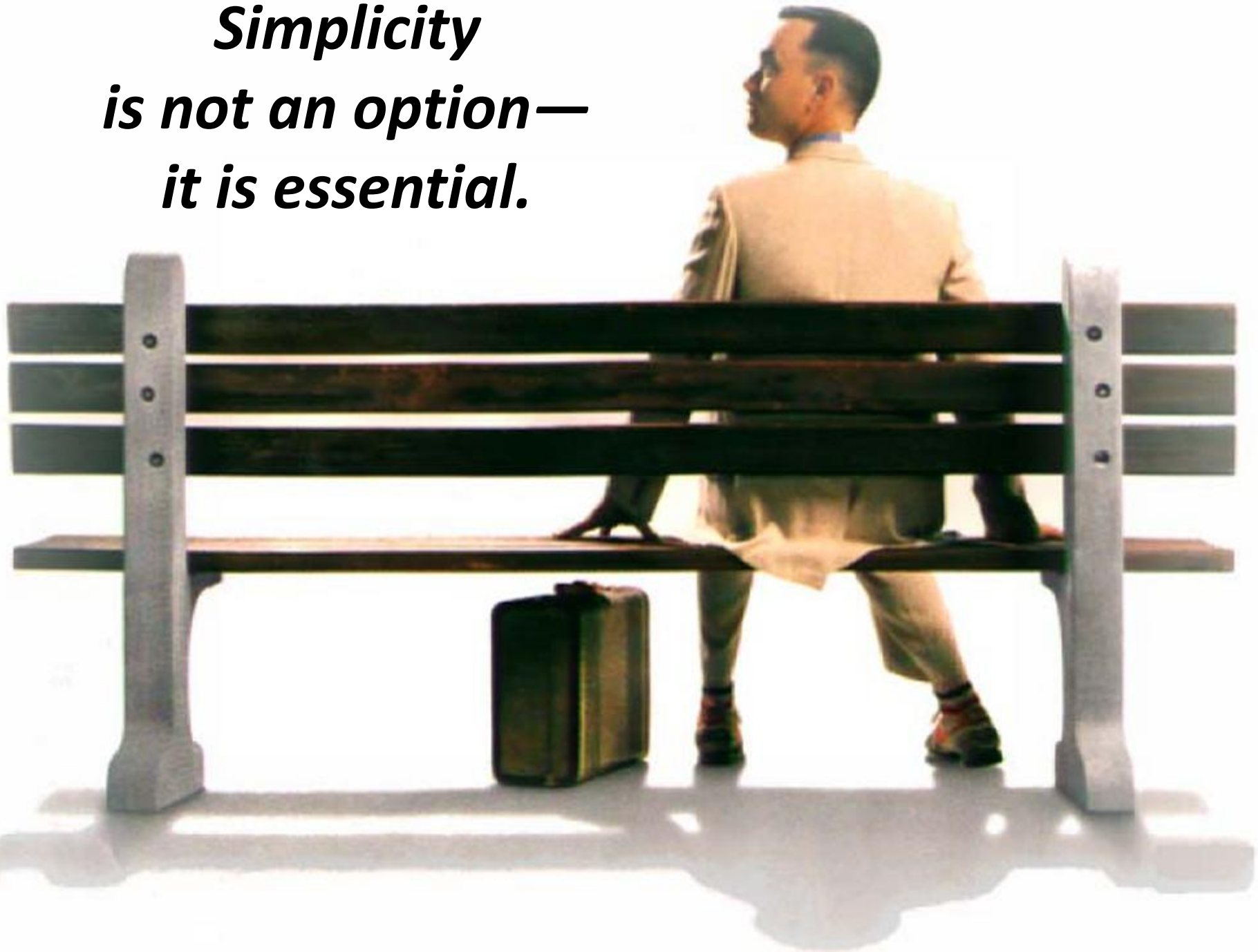


# Key Messages

*Think of them as headlines*

- **Must be credible**
- **Offer proof**
- **Must be clear, concise**
- **Cannot convey more than three ideas**
- **Define terms**

***Simplicity  
is not an option—  
it is essential.***



# Answer + Message

A media interview is  
not your typical  
conversation

- ***Question + Answer***

A media interview  
requires strategy to get  
your message points  
across

- ***Question → Answer,  
plus Message***

*Consumer Reports* claims that beef from conventionally raised cows is more likely to have bacteria overall, as well as bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics, compared to beef from sustainably raised cows. As a meat scientist, what do you think about that?

**REPORTER**

I am suspect of the methodology used in the research. To begin, in analyzing their findings, there is no way to know if any samples came from animals that had been given an antibiotic.

**Question** → **Answer**

**MEAT SCIENTIST**

As a meat scientist, let me first emphasize that all beef in the United States is safe. All beef is subject to the same stringent government regulations and inspection procedures that ensure safety. As a consumer (mom/dad/grill master), I am confident that all beef, including ground beef, is safe and nutritious.

Ground beef is the safest it has ever been with (greater than 90 percent reductions in *E. coli* O157:H7) in the past XX years. Beef farmers and ranchers, along with food companies, have food safety programs, intervention technologies, and additional voluntary testing programs to further improve the beef supply and protect consumers.

Where *Consumer Reports* also fails its readers is interchanging the terms organic and sustainable. They do not mean the same thing. Sustainable refers to a system that is renewable for the long term and uses resources in the most efficient way possible to maximize productivity. Organic means that the beef animal has been raised and fed under specific, regulated methods. It is also important to point out that both grain-fed and grass-fed systems can be organic and NOT all grass-fed beef is organic.

**Question** → **Answer + Message + Supporting Information**

# Delivering Your Message

A yellow delivery van is parked on a city street. The van is the central focus, with its front and side visible. In the background, there are buildings and scaffolding, suggesting an urban environment. The text 'Delivering Your Message' is overlaid at the top in a large, white, bold font. A list of six bullet points is overlaid on the right side of the van, also in white, bold font.

- Be concise. Keep it simple.
- Be conversational, but use your messages.
- Define industry terms and negative buzzwords.
- Stay positive.
- Show concern and genuine interest.
- If you don't know, say so.

# Verbal Bridges

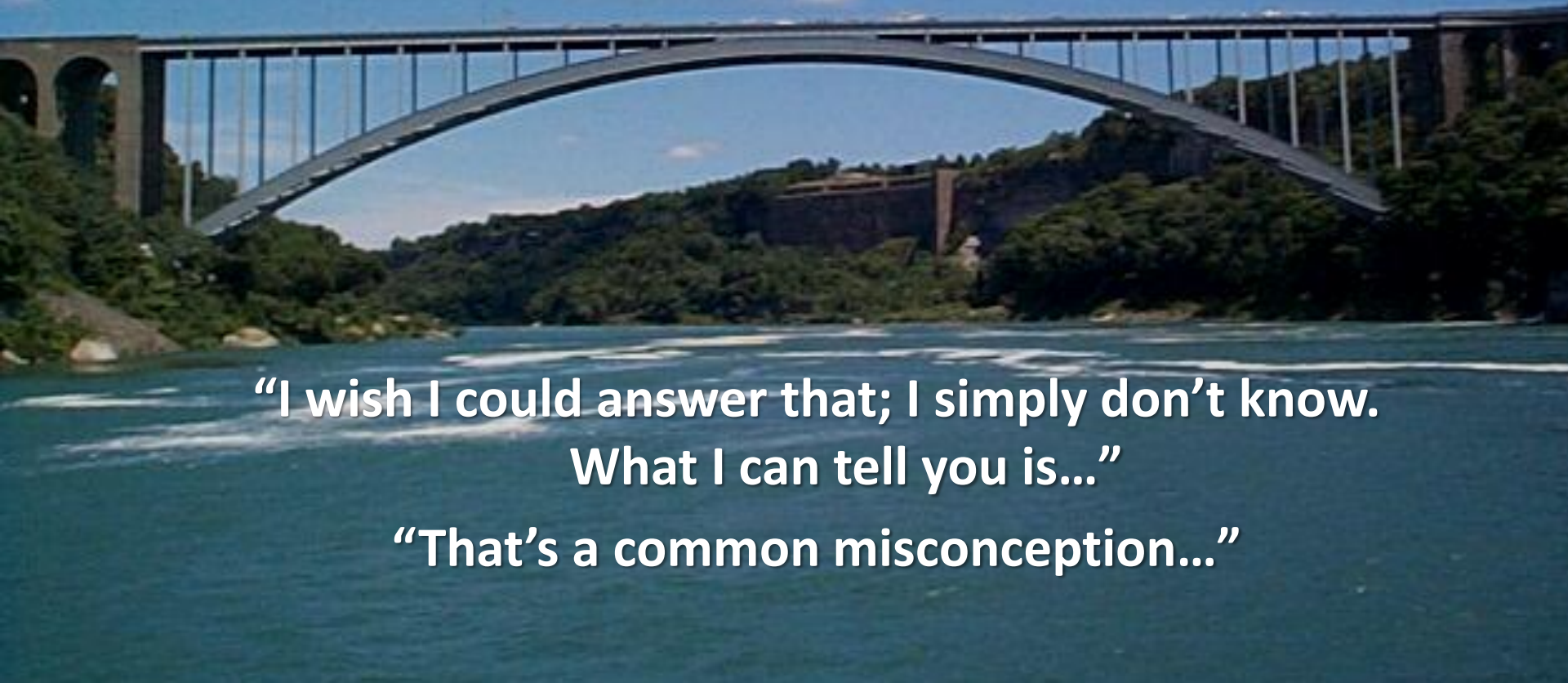
“No, Bill. What I said was ...”

“Well, Jane, the real focus is ...”

“Let me put that into perspective...”

“I wish I could answer that; I simply don't know.  
What I can tell you is...”

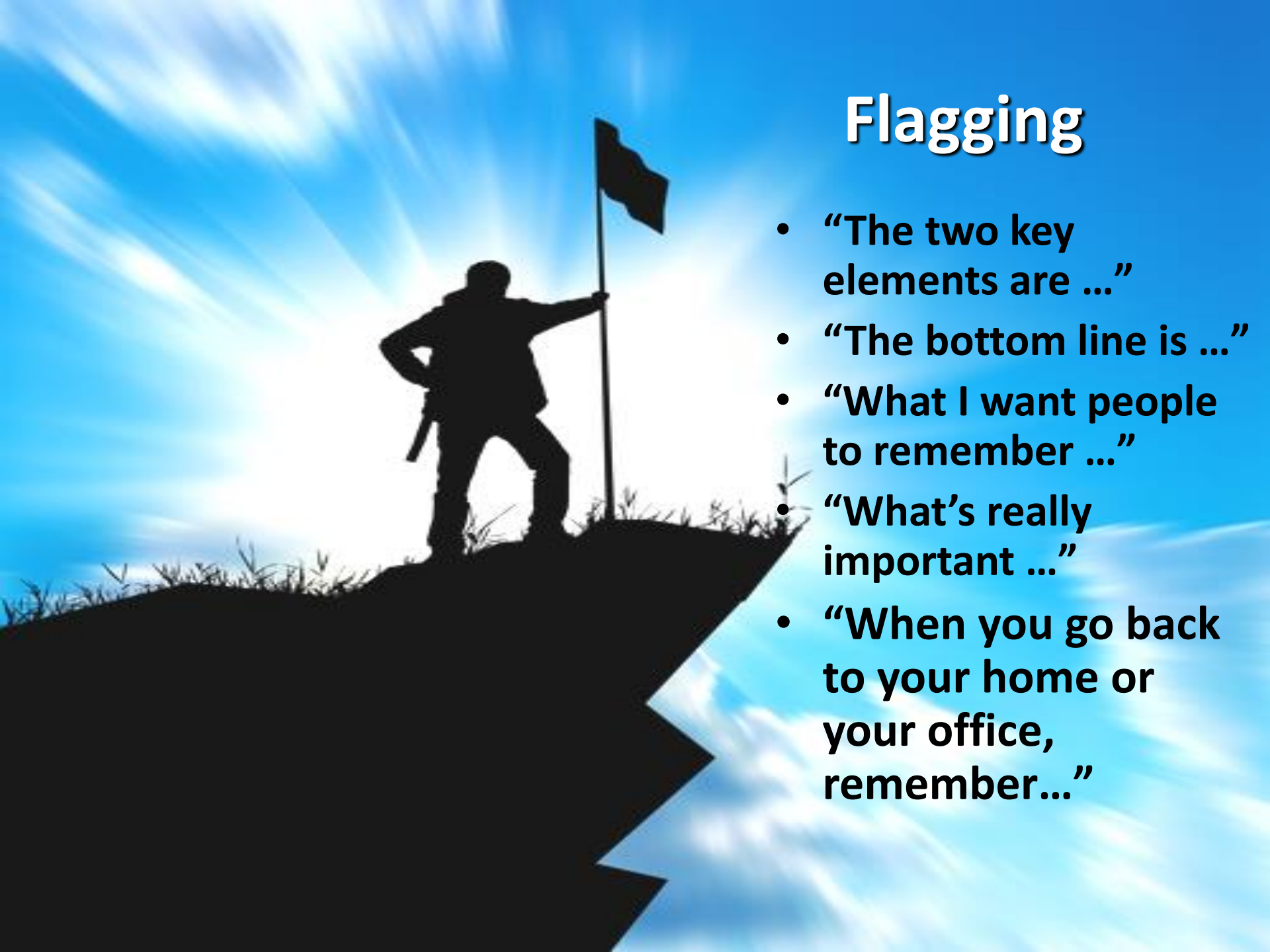
“That's a common misconception...”





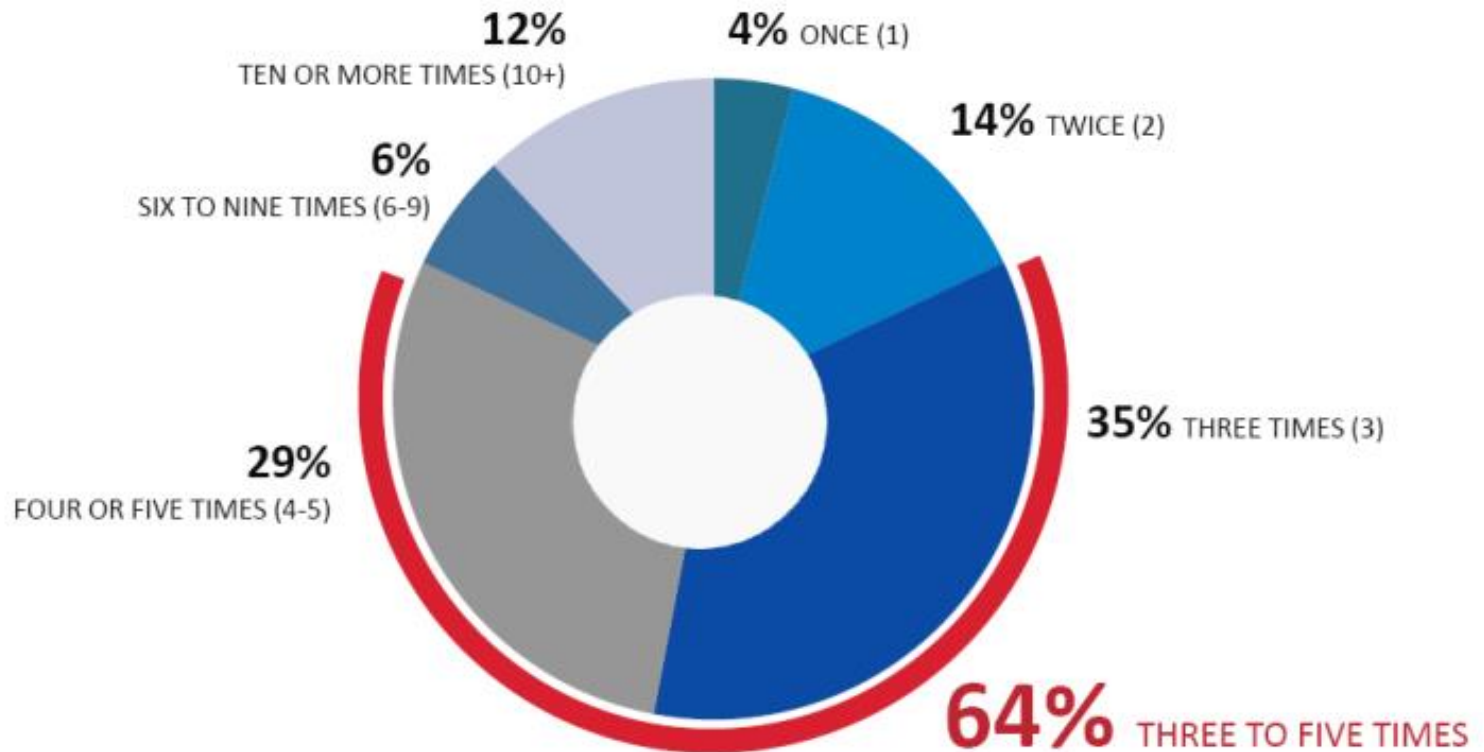
# Flagging

- “The two key elements are ...”
- “The bottom line is ...”
- “What I want people to remember ...”
- “What’s really important ...”
- “When you go back to your home or your office, remember...”



# SKEPTICISM AND DISPERSION REQUIRES REPETITION

MAJORITY NEEDS TO HEAR COMPANY INFORMATION 3-5 TIMES TO BELIEVE MESSAGES



# Skype Interviews

- Look at camera, not the screen
- Avoid interruptions
- Watch the background and lighting
- Practice in advance
  - Audio, video, expressions
- Solid color clothing
- Keep enthusiasm in check
- Be succinct



# Radio Interviews

- Face the microphone
- Wait for the question to end
- Don't rush your answer
- Speak in short sentences
- Provide examples and visual references
- Annunciate, especially the first three words
- Maintain your energy...and smile!



# Television Interviews

- Make and then hold eye contact
- Sit at the edge of your seat
- Dress to fit your role
  - Lab coat vs. sport coat; solid colors--no patterns
- It's a sound bite world
- Be prepared with examples, anecdotes, visuals
- Housekeeping
  - Turn off cell phone, change out of pocket, spit out gum



# Newspaper, Magazine Interviews

- Be responsive
  - Call back, ask for a deadline
- Check out the publication and the reporter
- Remember who's the audience
- Stick to the messages and talking points
  - You can always provide additional information
- Set your own time limit
- If conducted over the phone, stand up and smile



# Vocal and Visual Elements

- Face
- Hands
- Props
- Posture
- Eyes
- Voice
- Clothes
- Barriers



# Measuring Success

**Did you tell  
a compelling story  
in 30 words or  
in 30 seconds?**



# Follow-Up

- Monitor coverage
- Evaluate
- Say 'thank you'
- Correct misinformation
- Be a resource, again





If the cow jumped over the moon today.

# Handling tough questions

# The Tough Questions



- Know your key messages
- Practice bridging techniques
- Ask a question yourself

# The Tough Questions

- When it's hostile:
  - Diffuse the situation with a smile or careful humor
  - Understand the core of the question
  - Know the difference between an answer and a response
  - Don't lie and don't reply 'no comment'
  - Bridge to a positive perspective—your message
  - Stick to the information; ignore the personality
  - Be ready to move on to the next question

# Using Science to Answer the Question

- Don't lead with the science, but use it to support your messages
- Make facts and figures real
- Provide the context; show examples
- Show how it works, just don't tell how it works
- Keep it simple, but don't dumb it down
- Consider how the science affects the listener/reader

# 11 Commandments of a Media Interview

- ✓ Be a source before you are a subject
- ✓ Every appearance, every conversation have the potential to lead to a story
- ✓ Have a mission and a message
- ✓ Know your audience
- ✓ Know your facts and back them up
- ✓ Diffuse a tough question, then bridge to your message
- ✓ Repeat messages...often
- ✓ Know that actions speak louder than words
- ✓ If you make a mistake, correct it and restate
- ✓ Nothing is 'off the record'
- ✓ End on a strong note

*No one cares how much you know,  
until they know how much care.*

*~Theodore Roosevelt*