What’s in this issue…

Safety: Making kids feel safe:
Around the country, people are feeling anxious about school safety. The tragic high school shooting in Parkland, Florida, has touched everyone, but students and their parents are facing new fears about safety in their own schools. Kids tend to personalize issues they hear about and become fearful and anxious. Read about warning signs for heightened anxiety in your child and tips for helping them cope with this new stress.

Key 2018-19 Dates for School Calendars:
The annual list of key dates for the school year includes interesting and important events to help you plan your school calendar for 2018-19. Please note that some groups/states celebrate appreciation days or weeks on different dates, particularly those for classified school employees and teachers.

News from the front lines: How and why to communicate the bigger message:
Face-to-face meetings are an important way to communicate, but many people dread them because of the time they require. Read tips for setting expectations to make your meetings more effective and meaningful.

Make your meetings meaningful:
Staff on the “front lines” of your district — in a classroom or school office — have important opinions about your district, but their perspectives may be limited to their buildings or classroom. Keep them informed about the bigger picture to ensure that they are telling the story of the whole district with all of the facts.

Rules for managing your PR staff to create effective communications:
Managing staff members is not intuitive for most people. To get the best out of your staff, you need to master good leadership skills. This is especially true for your communications team. Read rules that will help you help them do their best work.

Rumor control: Preventing and responding to misinformation, gossip and rumors:
It is difficult to combat gossip. In the era of social media, it is even more challenging to overcome and correct public perceptions. Read these concrete things you can do to help minimize and mitigate the spread of rumors.
SAFETY: MAKING KIDS FEEL SAFE

Kids tend to personalize issues they hear about. Even if they have no personal connection to an event, they imagine themselves in the same situation. What does this look like in your children? When something scary happens — in our own communities or on the national stage, it is normal to personalize it. Kids, especially, imagine themselves facing similar circumstances. What if that happened here? What if it happened to me?

After a school shooting, it becomes even more likely that students will be fearful and anxious as school talk to students to help them process what happened. Schools also conduct regular lockdown and safety drills to help prepare in the event of such a tragedy in their buildings. After a school shooting, they may happen more frequently.

This can be very scary, especially to young children. Experts recommend sheltering them from information about the tragedy, if possible. “The American Academy of Pediatrics President Thomas McInerny, MD, says in a statement that if possible, “young children should not be exposed to the extensive media coverage of the event — in other words, turn off the TV, computer, and other media devices.” http://wb.md/2oHByqe

Watch for warning signs

It is important to keep communication open and watch for warning signs of higher than normal trauma-related anxiety. Kids can have a wide range of reactions from a tragedy. How do you know if your child is having difficulty processing their feelings around the event?

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, there are many different responses to potentially traumatic events, and they generally lessen with time. Normal responses immediately following an event, or even for several weeks or months afterward can include:

• Feeling anxious, sad or angry
• Trouble concentrating and sleeping
• Continually thinking about what happened

If these feelings persist for a long time or interfere with everyday life, it may be time to seek professional help. Watch for these signs:

• Worrying a lot or feeling very anxious, sad, or fearful
• Crying often
• Having trouble thinking clearly
• Having frightening thoughts, reliving the experience
• Feeling angry

Gina Patterson, Executive Director Virginia School Boards Association (800) 446-8722 gina@vsba.org
• Having nightmares or difficulty sleeping
• Avoiding places or people that bring back disturbing memories and responses.

Physical responses to trauma may also mean that an individual needs help. Physical symptoms may include:
  • Headaches
  • Stomach pain and digestive issues
  • Feeling tired
  • Racing heart and sweating
  • Being very jumpy and easily startled

What can you do to help your child when a scary event happens?

First, assess and address your own feelings. Children’s reactions to trauma are strongly influenced by adults’ responses to trauma. This is unchartered territory for most people. The following tips are from child psychologist Ben Martin:

1. **Listen** to the student. People need to vent, to express their concerns, fears, outrage, anger and upset. They’re not looking for answers or judgment.

2. **Reassure.** After the person has spent some time talking about their fears and concerns, reassure them of their safety — that the entire community is now focused on keeping them safe and secure.

3. **Limit the information to basic facts** when discussing the events with younger children. Do not go into specific details or use words they may not understand.

4. **Do not lie.** If they ask, “Can this happen to me? Can this happen here?” Reiterate how the community is focused on working to keep everyone safe in the community.

5. **Personal discussions are the best way to share information with this group.** Avoid letting young children watch the news. It is too difficult for most of them to process.

6. **Focus your discussions on what they share with you.** When discussing the events with preteens and teens, more detail is appropriate, and many will already have seen news broadcasts. Be careful of how much media they are exposed to.

7. **Regardless of age,** even if groups are more mature, do not forget to reassure them of their safety and your efforts to protect them. All kids must hear this message.

8. **Be on the lookout** for physical symptoms of anxiety.

9. **Talk to Parents and caregivers,** tell the they need to reassure children often that they will be protected.

10. **If you or parents are concerned,** talk directly with their school counselor, family doctor, or mental health professional. For teens, suggest that they visit the teen-help

**KEY 2018-19 DATES FOR SCHOOL CALENDARS**

Here are some special days you may want to note on your 2018-19 school year calendar or take into consideration as you establish programs for next year. They are from Resources for Planning the School Calendar, published and distributed by Educational Research Service and National School Public Relations Association, 15948 Derwood Road, Rockville, MD 20855. Order online at nspra.org/products or call (301) 519-0496. The price is $38 per copy plus $10 estimated shipping and handling.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
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<td>Sept. 1-30</td>
<td>Library Card Sign-Up Month</td>
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<td>International Literacy Day</td>
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<td>Hispanic Heritage Month</td>
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<td>Oct. 15-16</td>
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<td>Mayflower Day</td>
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<td>Citizenship/Constitution Day</td>
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<td>Sept. 17-23</td>
<td>Constitution Week</td>
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<td>Sept. 18-19</td>
<td>Yom Kippur</td>
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<td>Sept. 21</td>
<td>International Day of Peace</td>
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<td>Sept. 28</td>
<td>National Good Neighbor Day</td>
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<td>Oct. 1-31</td>
<td>Crime Prevention Month</td>
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<td>Czech Heritage Month</td>
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<td>Italian American Heritage and Culture Month</td>
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<td>Oct. 1-31</td>
<td>National Bullying Prevention Month</td>
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<td>National Principals Month</td>
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<td>Polish American Heritage Month</td>
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<td>Trick or Treat for UNICEF Month</td>
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<td>German American Day</td>
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<td>National Educational Office Professionals Week</td>
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<td>Canadian Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>Columbus Day</td>
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<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>International Walk to School Day</td>
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<td>Oct. 14-20</td>
<td>National Character Counts Week</td>
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<td>Oct. 15-19</td>
<td>National School Lunch Week</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>World Food Day</td>
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<td>Oct. 16-20</td>
<td>National School Bus Safety Week</td>
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<td>Oct. 23-31</td>
<td>Red Ribbon Week (Drug-Free America)</td>
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<td>United Nations Day</td>
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<td>Oct. 27</td>
<td>Make a Difference Day</td>
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<td>Halloween</td>
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<td>Nov. 1-30</td>
<td>Native American Heritage Month</td>
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<td>Nov. 4</td>
<td>Standard Time</td>
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<td>Nov. 6</td>
<td>Election Day</td>
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<td>Nov. 11</td>
<td>Veterans Day</td>
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*Begin at sunset on the preceding day.
You often hear that the front-line staff are the most knowledgeable about the district, but their perspective — while important — is often limited to their classroom, grade level or school. This is exactly what makes it an area of potential growth.

Teachers and office managers have the unique opportunity to deal with the public every day. They’re the first ones to know that parents are complaining about the new testing procedures, the first to know that the construction crew for the new gym hit an archeological site — and the first ones to learn that the flu is going around.

But what good does all this new information do, and how can we effectively use it? And more importantly, what opportunities are we missing to develop a stronger relationship between the administration and the community it serves?

**Communicating the bigger message**

It’s important to make the front line staff a part of the team. Because they face the public every day, they are in the best position to communicate the larger message of the district. This is important so the people working day-to-day on the problems of the school feel like they’re a part of a bigger plan. And also when it comes time for a levy or a bond, those front-line staff and parents become outreach angels because they feel included in the process.

“When you hear a first-grade teacher talking about how well (or not) the district is being managed, it isn’t the whole story,” says Marcia Latta, communications consultant, “but it’s a good reminder to communicate with all staff.”

**Empowering Front-Line Staff — Sharing information with them helps them do their jobs to the best of their abilities.**

**Misinformation spreads like a virus**

Human nature being what it is, people looking for answers are eager to accept the answer they’re given, even if it’s wrong. When your front-line staff don’t have the information they need, it’s easy to lose the thread of the conversation the communications staff is working so hard to have with the community.

**Parent:** Why are they putting up a new gym? What’s wrong with the old one?

**Teacher:** I think the district had some extra money and it was allocated to our school.

**Parent:** If the school had extra money, why didn’t they put it into expanding the library? You know my kid couldn’t even get computer time when he had a research paper due?

Of course, that parent is going to tell another unhappy parent how the district is wasting its money. Ouch! How much better would it be if the teacher knew about the district’s successful bond effort to replace buildings that weren’t earthquake safe?

Gina Patterson, Executive Director Virginia School Boards Association (800) 446-8722 gina@vsba.org
Communication goes both ways

Having a general awareness of issues that the district is facing means that your front-line staff has the opportunity to nip misinformation in the bud.

**Parent:** My daughter is showing a real gift for math, but I see here that the school’s classes only go up to geometry. What about the calculus she needs to get into MIT? Do I need to switch her to another school?

**Office Administrator:** *The district is partnering with the community college system so that we can expand our offerings — by 2020 she should have access to all the community college’s courses in addition to the school’s.*

**Parent:** Oh. I guess that’s OK.

It also means that they can be an advocate for the school’s mission, connecting kids to programs that will help them succeed.

**Office Administrator:** *When your daughter gets to middle school, you might want to take a look at the summer college program they have — it’s a summer camp where you get to live on-campus and experience college classes. The district also has several scholarships available.*

**Parent:** Wow. She’d love that. I didn’t realize the district had so many programs available for gifted kids.

Your front-liners can get the dirt

Perhaps most importantly, when your front-line staff know the mission of the district, they can be your boots on the ground for gathering information. How is a new program likely to be received? What do people think about this year’s testing schedule and what would they like to change? Do they feel their child’s needs are being met?

J. Marie Riche, founder and principal consultant at Ideal Communications, observes that well-trained PR people are integral to this process as well. “They’re not just reporting out what we’re doing — they’re asking where is the next piece. They are able to report back from community meetings and say ‘this is where you played a difference in the lives of kids, and here is where we need your help next’.”

Districts pay lots of money to run surveys each year, but if your boots on the ground already have a decent understanding of how the community feels about an issue, and your encouragement of two-way communication means that information filters up to the decision makers, it allows the district to invest its dollars more wisely, focusing more on the specifics for the survey or waiting to spend money on a survey until they’ve already made a big community outreach effort.

Your front-line staff can be your biggest asset, or your greatest weakness, depending on how effectively you are able to deliver your district’s messaging to your employees in the field.

*Contributed by Megan J. Wilson, Los Angeles-based freelance writer and communications consultant*
MAKE YOUR MEETINGS MEANINGFUL

Be honest. When that meeting invitation arrives in your inbox, the first thing that comes to mind is sometimes, “I wonder how I can get out of this one.”

People often dread meetings. That’s partly because meetings take up so much work time. There are informational meetings, planning meetings, and meetings to discuss other meetings.

And when you leave the meeting, invariably there is work that needs to be done — except you may not have time to do it because you have another meeting to attend. It’s enough to instill a permanent fear of meetings into the strongest heart.

Luckily, meetings don’t have to elicit that reaction. The key is to plan them well and, most importantly, only call one when it’s absolutely necessary to get the job done.

Meetings should not have hidden agendas.

In fact, meetings that are well-organized and well-planned tend to generate the opposite reaction. Participants enjoy being in a productive gathering where important work gets accomplished. They tend to walk away with a sense of enlightenment and accomplishment, and feel the time was well spent. They feel good about having participated.

Here are some tips for making your meetings effective and meaningful:

1. **Make sure the meeting is absolutely needed.** Too often we schedule meetings almost for the sake of having a meeting. If there’s nothing pressing on the agenda, cancel it or conduct the business by phone or email. It’s irritating to spend more time traveling to the meeting than in attending the meeting.

2. **Set a timeline for each meeting and stick to it.** If the meeting is scheduled to start at 10 a.m., don’t visit and eat snacks until 10:15 or 10:20 a.m. Respect people’s time by starting on schedule and also by ending at the scheduled time, even if you haven’t covered all of the agenda items. If there’s more to cover, set another date to reconvene.

3. **Schedule a reasonable length of time for meetings.** No matter how important the work is, it’s hard for people to focus for more than a couple of hours. Try to limit meetings to about 2-3 hours. Also pay attention to the time of day that you schedule your gathering. It may be difficult to get everyone’s undistracted attention for an 8 a.m. meeting because they are probably settling in to their day, checking email, etc. A better start time is usually 9 or 10 a.m.

4. **Distribute the agenda ahead of time.** The agenda is your roadmap for organizing your meeting and keeping it on schedule. It helps ensure that you cover all the topics that need to be covered and not get sidetracked by conversation that may not be relevant to your goals for the meeting. By sending it out in advance, participants have a chance to think about the topics and be better prepared with information to join in the conversation.

5. **Make sure essential people attend.** It can be extremely frustrating to arrive at a meeting and then find that some of the key players who are essential to accomplishing the meeting’s goals aren’t there. It’s important for the meeting organizer to check in with key players in advance to make sure they are able to attend or at the least send someone in their place who can serve as their proxy.
6. **Set ground rules to eliminate distractions.** It’s sometimes helpful to agree on ground rules as a way to eliminate distractions and keep everyone focused on the important work at hand. Examples are:
   a. Show up on time and come prepared.
   b. Listen with an open mind.
   c. Please silence your cell phone and only check for messages during breaks.

7. **Assign a facilitator.** A strong facilitator will keep the meeting moving in a productive fashion and will ensure that the meeting’s goals are accomplished. If discussion drifts to topics that aren’t relevant to the agenda, the facilitator will guide it back on track. Some groups like to rotate facilitators so that different members have a chance to lead.

8. **Assign a recorder.** Every meeting needs a recorder to take notes and record decisions that are made, and the action items still left to do. Good notes make it easy to know which topics you have covered, and which items still need your attention.

9. **Distribute meeting notes.** Be sure to send copies of the meeting notes to all participants, so everyone can see what was discussed and what decisions were made. The notes should list who has been assigned an action item, so those people know what’s expected and when. The notes should also be sent to any participants who were unable to attend the meeting, so they are aware of the discussion and any decisions made.

Instead of instilling fear in your heart, meetings can inspire a sense of accomplishment and creativity. The key is taking time to plan well for their success.

*Contributed by Connie Potter, communications consultant*

**RULES FOR MANAGING YOUR PR STAFF TO CREATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

Many management concepts are universal — lead by example, never criticize an employee in public. The list goes on. But when it comes to managing communications professionals, there are a few unique rules for the educational leader to consider.

**Rule 1: Always keep your communicator in the loop.**

This is the most important. The communicator is only as useful as the information he or she has. If they are completely aware of what your executive team is working on, they can help you plan ahead and communicate effectively. If they are out of the loop, the best they can do is help with damage control — an ineffective and frustrating position for everyone.

Managing change is a big part of school district management and it is usually unpopular with a large part of your workforce. The communicator can help pave the way by getting messages out about the need for the proposed changes and creating feedback channels for employees to express their hopes and fears.
Being in the loop obviously requires the executive to open important meetings to the communications professional. And in turn, it requires the communicator to earn the trust that is necessary to be in those meetings. There is no room for gossip or sharing confidential matters, including personnel matters. The professional communicator must be informed clearly of the expectation of privacy and must remain above reproach in maintaining it.

Any breach of confidentiality will start a rapid downward spiral of distrust and ineffectiveness. If the communications person cannot be trusted with private information, they will not be able to effectively plan for some of the most difficult situations the superintendent will ever face. If the boss cannot trust the PR pro, she needs to get another one.

**Rule 2: Ask for advice from your communications pro and consider their advice.**

Sometimes executive leaders hire the best communicators they can recruit and then fail to get the anticipated value out of them because they try to tell them what to do all the time without ever listening.

Some executives misinterpret the communicator’s sharing their expertise as insubordination or ego. And while it is possible for a PR person to step over the line to the point of disrespect, this is most often not the case. Communicators are used to dealing with pushy news media and unhappy patrons and they always have the reputation of the leadership team and the superintendent foremost in their thoughts. So, if the PR person seems pushy with their own boss, they may not be pushy so much as protective.

Certainly, there will be times when the superintendent says, “I need you to do this,” or “I need you to do that.” But that should be the exception rather than the rule. Most of the time, the executive should tell the communicator what they are trying to accomplish and then listen to what ideas the communications pro suggests. The communicator is paid to produce, but they are also paid to think about complex issues and help find solutions. They do this with the set of professional skills and experience that they were hired for. It is up to the superintendent to tap into that expertise, rather than to stifle it with directives.

The very best PR professionals will be open with the boss when they think something is heading in the wrong direction. But they also know when time has come to say, “yes, Sir” or “yes, Ma’am,” and move forward in the direction their leader sets out. And they will work for the best possible outcome. They will never pout or sabotage as a result of not getting their way. And if they are proven right, their only priority will be to help improve the situation, rather than to prove that they were right, and the boss was wrong.

**Rule 3: Don’t punish the messenger.**

Your public relations person is supposed to feel safe sharing news with you. That means the good news and the bad news. It is easy to be happy with the messenger when the news is good. But the executive must also be open to hearing bad news, so they can work together to turn the narrative to something more positive.

It is possible for the PR person to get so busy putting out fires and dealing with negative situations that they forget to keep up the flow of positive stories. It is fair for the executive to point this out when
they perceive an imbalance in the narrative. But the issue is timing. When your PR person is in the middle of dealing with the fourth negative story in a row, that is not the time to express your displeasure all of the recent “bad press.” Think about broaching the subject when the storms have subsided and the PR person has the bandwidth to make some positive news.

The superintendent is an important source of positive news for the communications person. The superintendent is in a position to learn about all sorts of pride points because people in schools tend to mention things they are proud of to the boss. The principal who forgets to tell the communications department about something great in their school may very well think to tell the district leadership when they visit her school. Rather than complain about a lack of good news, the top district leaders can do a great deal of good by passing these positive story ideas forward.

Rule 4: Support them when they need information or feedback from busy people.

Refer to Rule 1. A communicator can best serve the district when they are well-informed. And that means they have all the information they need, when they need it — not just a vague idea of what is going on.

The tough part is that they will depend on others in the district to provide them with the detail they need. Everyone in a school district is busy — everyone. So, the executive should support their PR person in getting information from very busy people on timelines that work. Most often the PR person is not setting an arbitrary deadline. The timelines are dictated by the needs of the superintendent or sometimes the news media, neither of which are under the PR person’s control. The executive leadership can provide a great boost in communicator effectiveness simply by letting everyone know that the project is a priority for them, not just for the communications pro.

PR professionals are a special type of employee. They need all of the same supports as any other worker. But they also require a few special supports from the boss. If you follow the four rules above, you will develop a working relationship built on trust, resulting in timely, effective, proactive communications.

Contributed by Jay Remy, communications consultant

RUMOR CONTROL: PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO MISINFORMATION, GOSSIP, AND RUMORS

In our social-media-driven, 24-hour-news-cycle world, rumors can spread with the click of a button. Getting ahead of, and responding to, rumors can feel like a Sisyphean task, but there are some concrete things you can do to help minimize and mitigate the spread of rumors.

Start out strong

There is no way to prevent all rumors. However, there are a number of things you can do to reduce the spread of rumors in your district. Having a strong and comprehensive communications plan helps by ensuring you get accurate information out to your target audiences quickly. Rumors thrive in the absence of regular,
clear and honest communication. Setting up strong, recurring communications can fill that void and provide factual information to counter rumors. Providing opportunities for authentic two-way communications is also critical. It will help establish trust and will provide you with early indications of what misinformation may be circling so that it can be addressed quickly.

Steps you can take to help prevent rumors include:

- **Make your messages clear, concise, coordinated and consistent.** Avoid jargon or overly complex or lengthy messages that could lead to confusion.
- **Make sure that communications are aligned and consistent.** Misunderstandings are almost inevitable if you send out communications that don’t align with messages coming from different departments or schools. If there is a change in message, make sure to address that clearly and indicate why the change is occurring.
- **Be timely and relevant.** Prioritize getting information out quickly and on schedule. Delays in communication often lead to speculation and rumors. If you have promised a communication at a specific time, provide one — even if you are just sharing that more will be coming soon.
- **Be honest and transparent.** Honesty is always the best policy. Providing simple, clear messages that rely on the facts will help to combat misinformation.
- **Practice proactive communications.** Address rumors or misinformation quickly and definitively. This is particularly important in crises where rumors can get out of hand fast.
- **Think about your messenger.** In order for your message to be effective, it must be seen as credible. Select a messenger or communications channel that your target audience will view as trustworthy.

**How rumors spread**

People have always had to deal with rumors, gossip and misinformation. Whether through misunderstanding or the intentional bending of the truth, inaccurate information spreads quickly by word of mouth, traditional media sources — and now, most critically — through social media and the internet. Social media makes it easier than ever before to stir things up with inaccurate news. And the challenge is that the inaccurate information is often much more interesting and eye catching than the truth. This can cause it to travel much faster and more broadly than the subsequent correction. It can also take some time for the correct information to be released, giving rumors a significant head start.

Rumors can spread at any time, but they are particularly likely in times of crisis when heightened public emotions combine with limited facts to produce a fertile ground for rumors. Having a rumor control plan in place before the crisis hits can help you respond quickly and more effectively.

**Key steps to rumor control**

There are three primary steps in rumor control:

1) **Determine what rumors are circulating.** Figure out ways to keep your ear to the ground and hear what’s being discussed both at the watercooler and online. Establishing key communicator networks that can pass on concerns or rumors can be very helpful. Reviewing social media posts for common themes can also be of value. Establish strong systems of two-way communication to ensure you are hearing about things before they get out of hand.

2) **Determine if the rumor is true or false.** Not all rumors are inaccurate. Some are true or at least have elements of truth in them. Quickly figuring out if the rumor is fully false, fully true, or a mix can help you prepare a response.
3) Correct inaccurate rumors and replace them with reliable information. Getting accurate information out quickly can help reduce the spread of rumors. Even if the rumor ends up being true or partially true, sharing a complete picture can help calm things down.

What’s driving the rumor?

As you work to draft your response, see if you can determine the emotion or concern that is driving the spread of the rumor. Are people feeling scared, powerless, confused or angry? Is there a way that you can respond to that foundational need or concern through your response to address not only this specific topic but the underlying issue as well?

The following are a few ideas to address common types of concerns:

- **Confusion or a lack of understanding**: Use stories or analogies to make the confusing more familiar. Connect the new information to something known and relatable. Use simple, clear language and short sentences.
- **Sense of unfairness**: Acknowledge and address any inequities. Discuss available options, trade-offs, or the reasons a specific decision was made. Admit to mistakes and commit to fixing them.
- **Lack of control**: Identify what people can do to be an active participant in the issue or topic. Provide choices whenever possible. Tell people where they can learn more or share feedback.
- **Lack of trust**: Acknowledge that there are multiple points of view. Identify trusted partners working with you. Share how you will be held accountable.

Your response

There is always a balance between getting your response out quickly to stem the rapid spread of the misinformation and taking the time to get your message just right. Here is where having a system in place can be very helpful. Ideally, you will be able to respond quickly and with a strong, accurate message. Establish templates of sample language that can be adapted quickly to the topic at hand. Identify the drafting, review, and release process and what needs to happen to speed up that process in a crisis situation. Set a timeframe for responding to rumors. Make sure you have a point person responsible for handling rumor control and quickly preparing a response.

Just as not all rumors are the same, not all responses will look the same either. Keep the level of response appropriate to the issue at hand. If the rumor is confined to a small audience, you don’t need to do a big public announcement. Simply address it with that audience involved. If the rumor is all over social media, make sure you don’t just put out a press release and call it good. Whenever possible, try and have a trusted source serve as your messenger. This may mean having local schools or classroom teachers address the issue rather than just having it come from the central office.

For larger rumors or issues that have gotten to the crisis stage, you may need to create a crisis communication plan. This plan should lay out the risks and various strategies you are employing to mitigate these risks and limit the spread of misinformation. These strategies may include releasing accurate information via social media and other online sources, sharing information directly via in-person conversations or town-hall style gatherings, or getting accurate information into the mainstream and print media. Since rumors are often linked to concerns or fear of some sort, the more you can recognize these concerns and help people feel heard, the better. Indicate a genuine sharing of concern. Practice active listening. Show compassion. And share accurate information to counter
the inaccurate elements. Admitting when you have made mistakes or when there is information that you don’t know, can also go a long way in helping to establish trust.

**Being proactive**

Establishing a strong two-way communications system that allows for the open and honest sharing of information is probably the most effective way to prepare for rumor control. Rather than hiding from rumors, seek them out. Establish ways to learn the gossip early on so you can prepare a response when needed. Some organizations have established rumor control web pages where they solicit rumors from stakeholders and provide responses. You could even create a fun and lighthearted Myth Busters section in your school or district newsletter or website that addresses rumors or misinformation.

Most rumors will eventually fade away on their own and it’s not wise to make too big a deal about them. However, an ounce of prevention (and a quick, clear correction) can go a long way in controlling gossip, misinformation, and rumors.

**Additional resources:**

**Rumors and Misinformation: How to Control the Deadly (Mis)Information Infection**

**Recent research reveals false rumors really do travel faster and further than the truth**
https://firstdraftnews.org/recent-research-reveals-false-rumours-really-do-travel-faster-and-further-than-the-truth/

*Contributed by Crystal Greene, communications consultant*