**Effective Communication Case Study Memo**

Prepare an internal memo in which you evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of communication among an organization and its publics to make recommendations to senior management. Select one of the following case studies located in the text, Public Relations Practices as the bases for your memo:

**b.** *The Tylenol Murders*, Chapter 2

**c.** *Exxon Corporation’s Bad Good Friday*, Chapter 5

**d.** *The Katrina Kalamity*, Chapter 13

**e.** *Wendy’s Fingers a Hoaxer*, Chapter 19

**Based on your selected case study define and answer all of the following questions in your memo:**

**a.** Evaluate the effectiveness of the communication between the organization and its intended public(s).

**b.** Identify the different publics involved in the case study. Differentiate between the internal and external publics involved.

**c.** What impact did the communications have on the intended public(s)? Could the message have been communicated more effectively? How?

**d.** Identify the different PR communication tools and techniques that were used to inform, influence, and motivate the public(s) in the case. Evaluate the benefits and risks of using these tools. What other tools would you have used?

**e.** If this crisis were to occur today, how would new technologies, such as the Internet, impact this case?

**f.** Due to the recent globalization of markets, would the outcome of this case be different if the events occurred today?

Be certain to use at least three (3) cited sources and have at least three (3) in-text citations that follow the APA standards on format. The sources must come from UOP textbook, and peer reviewed articles found through the online class material and the library.

**Note**: Turnitin report and Certificate of Originality must be submitted as separate documents to the assignments tab with formal papers.

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| **Memo Layout Example:**    1)    Organizations name at top of page (Letterhead) – internal memo follows.  2)    Double space (DATE, TO, FROM, SUBJECT).  3)    This is followed by the introductory paragraph (no headline) (1 paragraph)  4)    Recommendation: (direct pattern memo style) because reader is supportive and familiar with topic. (1 paragraph and 3 to 6 bullets)  5)    Findings and Analyses: (3 to 6 paragraphs) that support your recommendations.    Font sizes should follow APA standards as should in-text citations and references. Leave plenty of white space for easy reading.    **Example – outline of memo. Note the sections with bullets for proper format.**  **ABC Company** (Letterhead - created)  **Internal memo** (internal memo noted)  **DATE:** March 7, 2012  **TO:** Adam Brown, President  **FROM:** *Bonnie Akerson BA* (Signature followed by initials)  **SUBJECT:** Analysis of communication techniques  For ABC company, the preliminary investigation…(Introductory paragraph – no heading – one paragraph)  **Recommendations: (**1 paragraph and 3-6 bullets)  The preliminary investigation of XYZ company based on research and interviews from physical inspection, official records, interviews with officials and persons of knowledge….etc. the following:           Communication effectiveness evaluation between the organization and its intended public(s).           Identification of the different publics (internal and external) involved in the case study.           Impact the communications on the intended public(s). If and how, the message could have been communicated more effectively.           Identification of the different PR communication tools and techniques used to inform, influence, and motivate the public(s). Also, the benefits and risks of the tools used and what other tools could have been used.           How new technologies, such as the Internet, would impact this case today.           How recent globalization of markets, might impact the outcome of this case if the events occurred today.    **Findings and Analysis: (**3-6 paragraphs) supports your recommendations  Build out the findings and suggestions based on the bulleted topics.  **Note**: This memo uses the ‘direct style’. In this memo style, the purpose for writing is presented close to the beginning of a report, and therefore the organizational strategy is direct. Informal reports, such as the one you are creating, are usually arranged (written) directly. They open with an introduction, which is followed by facts and a summary. This type of report is prepared for busy executives who do not have time to wade through pages of information to get to the most important facts. Be aware that - unless the **reader is** **familiar** with the topic this style may be confusing - which is why some memo approaches require the ‘indirect strategy.’ This strategy appears more logical and mirrors the way a problem may be solved. The indirect strategy for memo organization is considered indirect when the conclusions and recommendations, if requested, appear at the end of the report. This style of report begins with an introduction or description of the problem, followed by facts, and interpretations from the writer. They end with conclusions and recommendations. This style is helpful when readers are unfamiliar with the problem - it is also useful when readers must be persuaded or they may be disappointed in or hostile toward the report’s findings. The goal is to first explain, then justify, then analyze the facts and make conclusions. |

**Case Study: Wendy’s Fingers a Hoaxer**

Just as airlines must be prepared for the dreaded day when crisis arrives in the form of a crash or hijacking, so, too, the public relations professionals at fast-food restaurants must be prepared for crises involving robberies or tainted food. Little, however, could have prepared the executives at Wendy’s restaurants, one of the nation’s leading fast-food purveyors, for the shocking report they received in March 2005.

A woman named Anna Ayala, dining at a Wendy’s in San Jose, California, reportedly discovered a portion of a human finger in a bowl of beef chili. Ayala went public immediately, threatening suit, and Wendy’s became embroiled in a five-alarm crisis, face-to-face with the nation’s and the world’s media.

**No Public Relations Finger-Pointing**

After the San Jose franchise owner notified management, Wendy’s corporate executives leapt into action with a multipronged public relations initiative.

* Wendy’s President Tom Mueller quickly stepped into the public spotlight, responding initially to the media.
* The company offered a $50,000 reward to the first person providing verifiable information leading to the identification or origin of the finger.
* A toll-free number was established to receive leads.
* A comprehensive internal investigation was undertaken to ensure that the finger didn’t come from an employee.
* The company and its president made themselves available to the media to reaffirm that “Nothing is more important to us than the quality of food we serve.”

The results of the internal investigation indicated that no Wendy’s personnel seemed to be involved. No restaurant employees or chili suppliers had suffered hand injuries. The employee who prepared the chili was a 10-year veteran of the San Jose restaurant. Wendy’s personnel appeared clean.

Nonetheless, the company was careful not to blame anyone, most of all Ayala. The company was circumspect in its public statements about the alleged victim. It never even suggested the possibility that Ayala might be involved in the crime. Even after Ayala’s lawyer quit and she mysteriously dropped her threat to sue, Wendy’s kept its distance from pointing fingers.

**The Finger Lingers**

Over the next month, the police investigation proceeded and Wendy’s continued to make itself available to the media. A month to the day after the finger fracas began, Wendy’s public relations director allowed the *New York Times* to follow him through damage control duties, meeting with the reporter at the restaurant scene of the crisis.

A nearly full-page, generally sympathetic story resulted, analyzing all aspects of Wendy’s public relations dilemma. The story even speculated as to where the found finger may have originated, including a woman who recently lost a finger in a leopard attack. Among other things, the public relations chief acknowledged that the picture of the finger in the chili “was a gruesome image . . . and it spread across the country in no time.”

Meanwhile, late-night comedians were having a field day. Jay Leno on the *Tonight Show* admitted he hadn’t been aware that “Wendy’s sold finger food.” Leno then referred to the company’s late founder: “I guess we know what Wendy’s did with their founder, Dave Thomas.”

Also busy on the airwaves was Ayala, who willingly told ABC’s *Good Morning America,* “Suddenly I chew something that’s kind of hard, crunchy . . . I spit it out.”

As the month wore on, the Wendy’s finger incident refused to go away. Sadly summarized the company’s public relations director to the *New York Times*, “We can’t put this behind us until we get a third party to exonerate us, if that’s possible. And it may never be possible.”

**Fingering the Finagler**

A little more than a month after Wendy’s nightmare began, it ended. Just like that.

Police in Las Vegas arrested Anna Ayala at her home and charged her with attempted larceny in perpetrating a hoax against Wendy’s. According to police, Ayala had been involved in other legal disputes, lots of them. She filed at least 13 civil actions in California and Nevada involving her and her children, most of the time settling for cash rather than going to trial.

When asked if police had suspected Ayala of committing a hoax, the head San Jose’s police department’s investigations unit answered yes.

In January 2006, Ayala and her husband pleaded guilty to the scheme to extort money from Wendy’s. Ayala’s husband had purchased the mysterious finger from a coworker, who lost it in an industrial accident. Ayala was sentenced to nine years in jail and her husband to 12 years. They were ordered to pay $21 million ([Figure 19-7](javascript:findAnchor('ch19fig07'))).

Figure 19-7 Finger to the slammer.

Wendy’s hoaxer Anna Ayala is escorted into Santa Clara County Superior Court to face the music for her fast-food finger fraud.

(AP Wide World Photos)

As for Wendy’s, President Mueller said, “We’re thrilled the arrest has been made.”

Less thrilling was the fact that the hoax forced Wendy’s to lay off dozens of workers and cost the company $2.5 million in lost sales.