



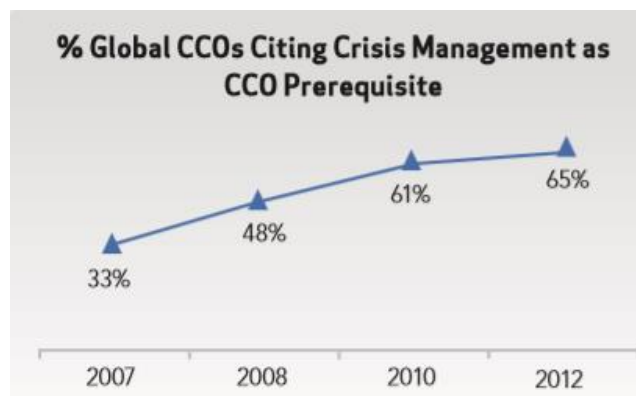
*the SCIENCE BENEATH the ART of PUBLIC RELATIONS™*

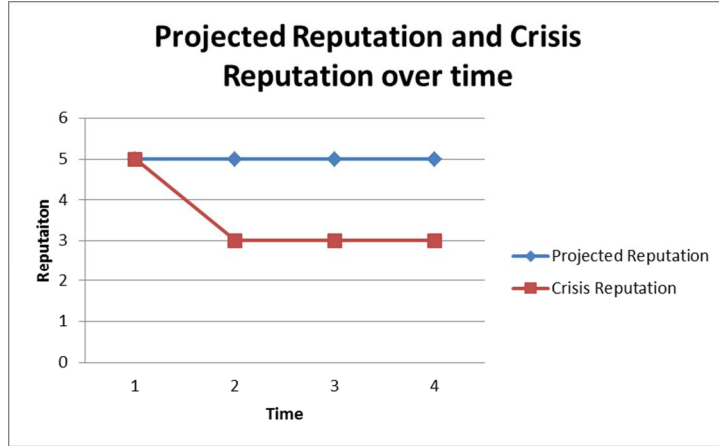
## How Theory Informs Practice: Situational Crisis Communication Theory

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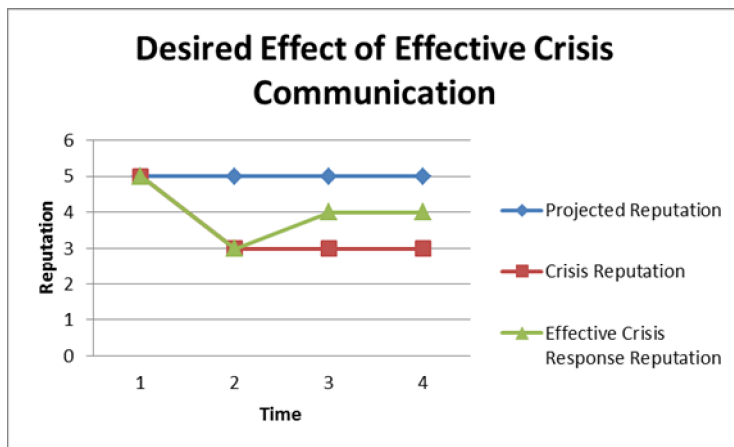
**Pathfinder Award**

## Results from CCO IV

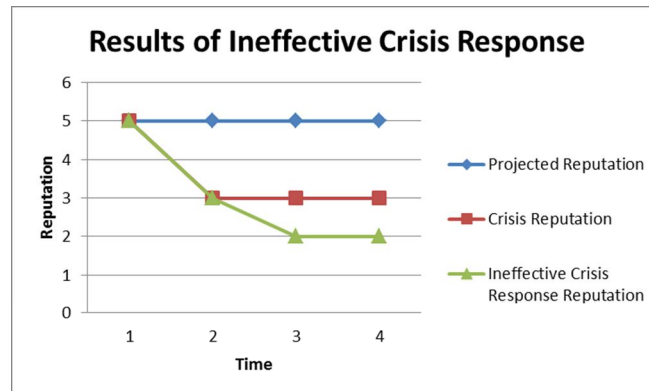




## Desired effect of communication

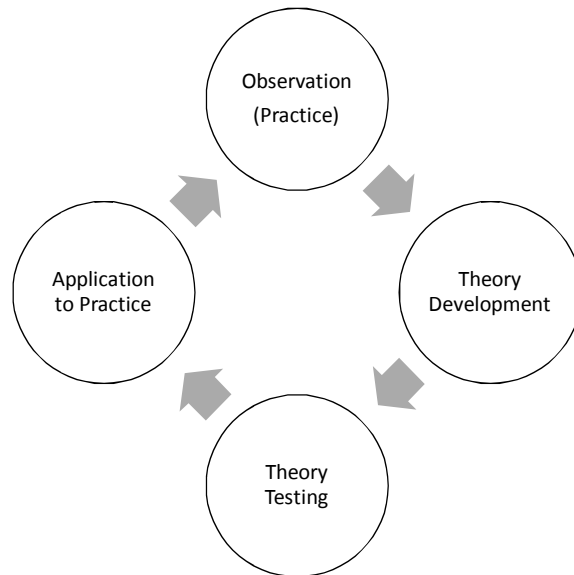


## Undesired effect



How do we know what makes crisis communication effective or ineffective?

## Practice-Theory Relationship



Speculation



Fact

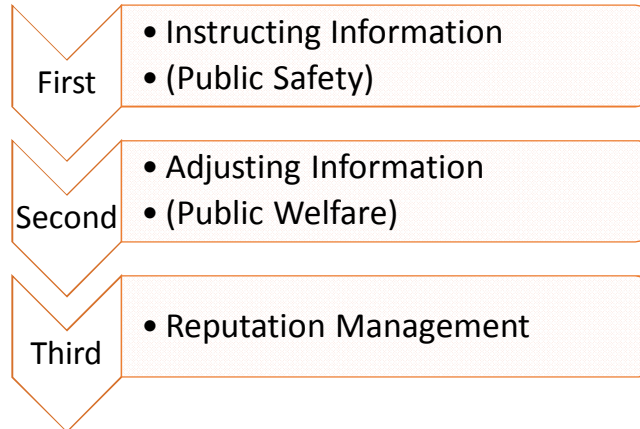
## Enter Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

- “ SCCT is theory based approach
- “ Social scientific principles to test relationships and predictions

## SCCT

- “ People attribute causes to events
- “ Critical to understand the crisis situation to gain benefits and avoid problems with crisis communication

## Crisis Responses



## Public Safety



## Public Welfare

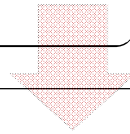


## The Ethical Base Response

- " Instructing
- " Adjusting
  - ❖ Corrective action
  - ❖ Sympathy

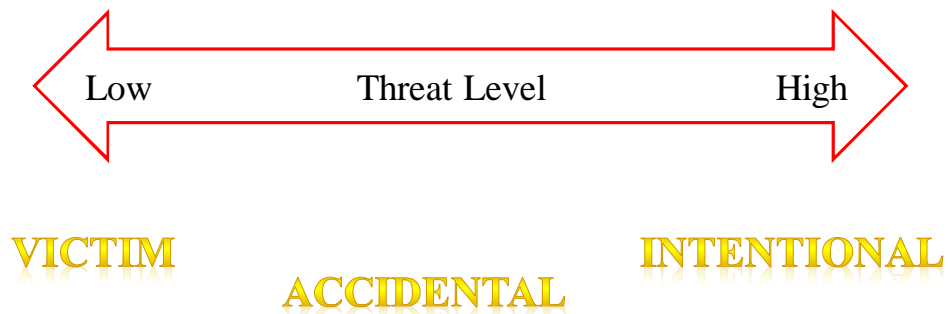
## Reputation Management: Assess Threat Level

Determine  
Crisis Type



Check for  
Intensifiers

## Crisis Type and Reputation Threat





Intensifiers

**Crisis history**

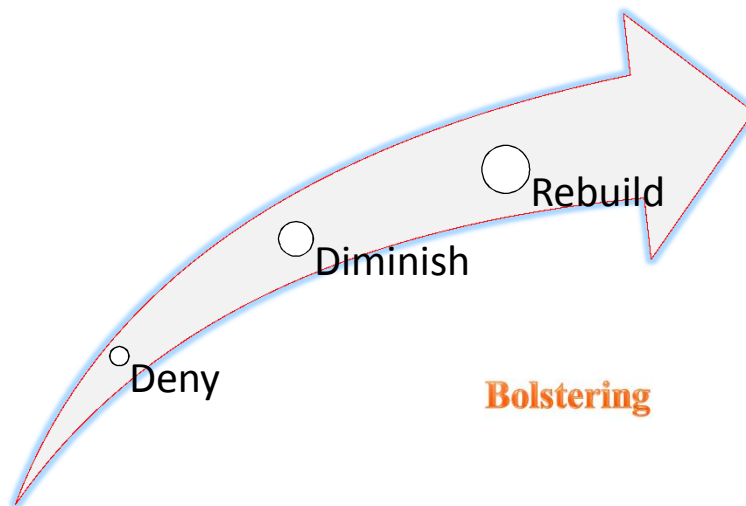
**Prior reputation**

## Velcro Effect

- “ History of crises intensifies crisis responsibility
- “ Negative relational reputation intensifies crisis responsibility
- “ Positives of limited value (no real halo)



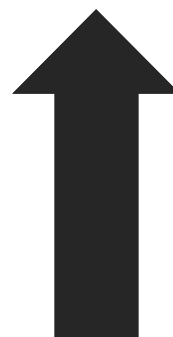
## Crisis Response Strategies: Accommodation Intensity & Cost



## Matching Situation and Response



Threat



Accommodation

## Why it works

É Crisis response repairs trust, helps to rebuild reputation

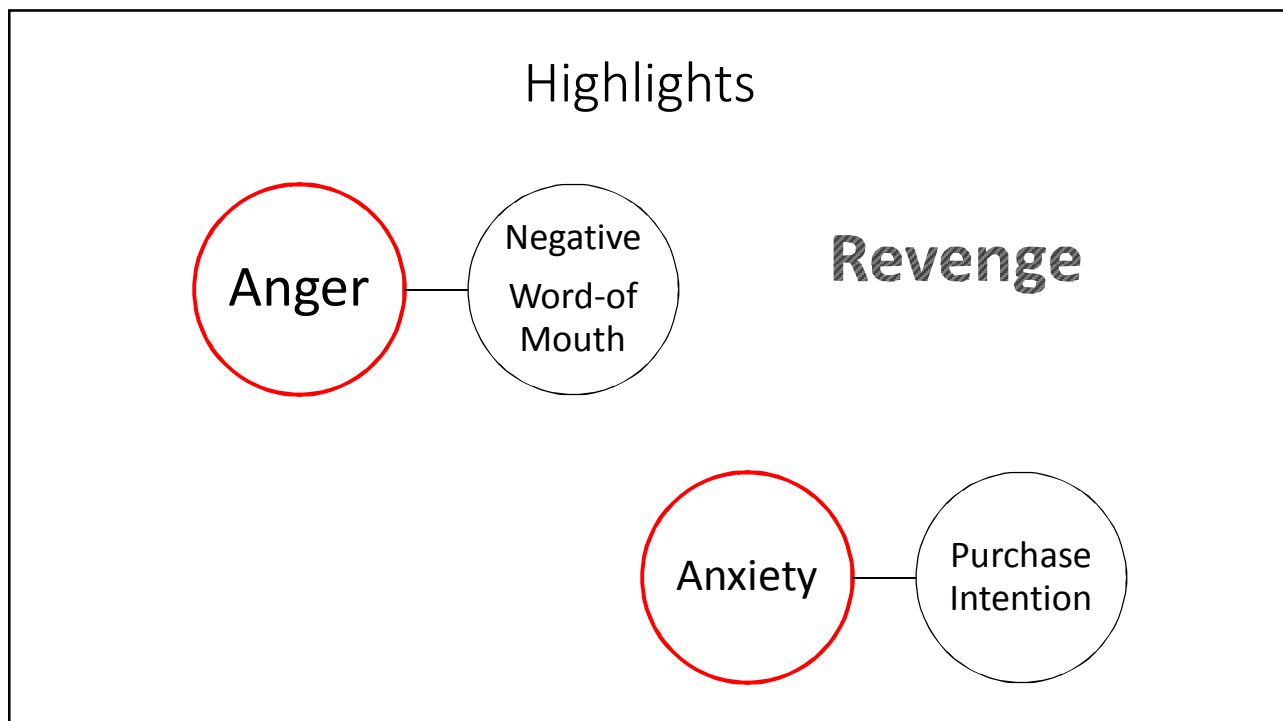
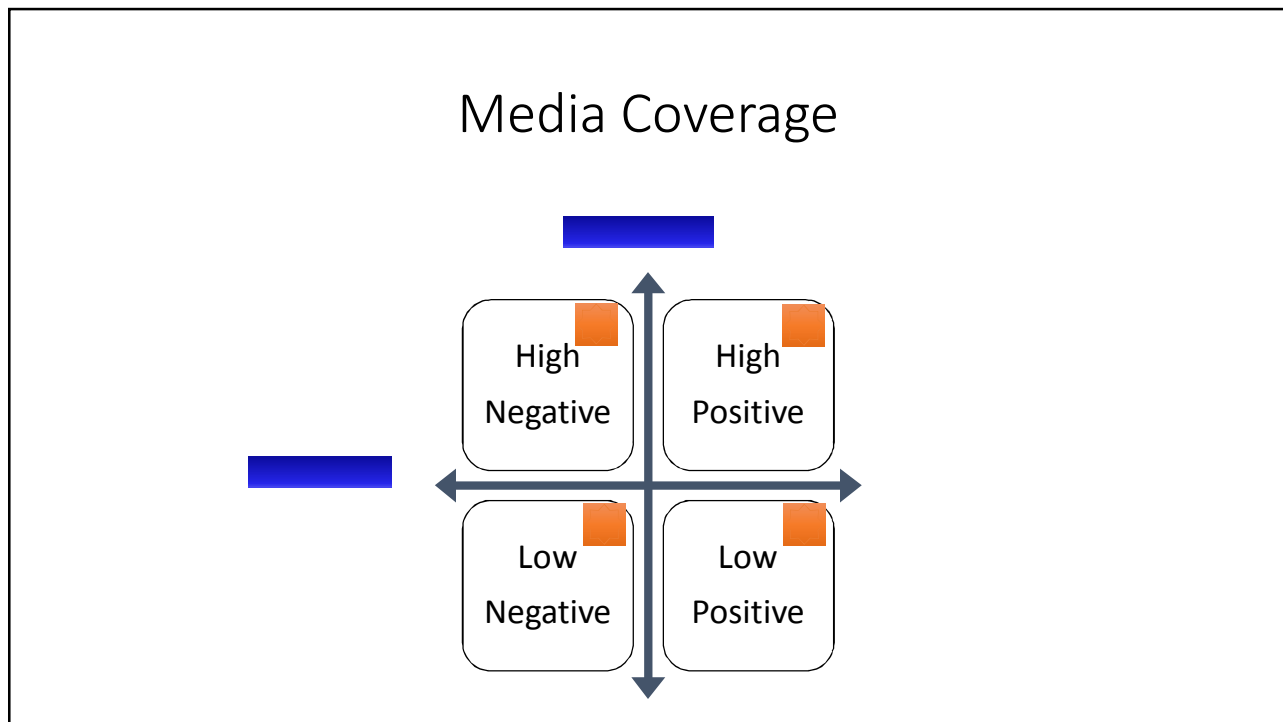
## Outcomes

### Short Term Effects

- É Lessen Reputation Damage
- É Lessen Anger
- É Lessen Anxiety
- É Alter Media Coverage (Tone & Amount)

### Long Term Effects

- É Quicker Reputation Recovery
- É Lessen Effect on Purchase Intention
- É Lessen Negative Word-of-Mouth
- É Share price



## Crisis Communication Traps

### **Apology**

- “ Can increase damage in minor crises (overkill)
- “ Can increase damage in ambiguous crises such as product harm
- “ Similar strategies can work just as well (compensation and sympathy)

### **Denial**

- “ Temptation to avoid the crisis
- “ Any responsibility intensifies damage
- “ Never scapegoat

## Timing of Communication & Reputation

- “ Best: Organization reports crisis first
- É Worst: Organization knew of problem but delayed action

## Open questions for crises in low trust environments

- “ How quickly does effective crisis communication restore a reputation?
- “ Can a crisis enhance a reputation with effective crisis communication?
  - “ When and how?
- “ How does social media affect crisis communication?
  - “ More asset or liability?

## Questions?



<http://www.instituteforpr.org/topics/crisis-management-and-communications/>

Crisis Management and Communication Entry  
Institute for Public Relations