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[Hennes Paynter Communications](#) is the only agency in Ohio focused exclusively on crisis communications and winner of the 2009 Gold Award for Crisis Communications and the 2009 "Best In Show Award" at the recent Public Relations Society of America Cleveland Rocks Award Program.  
 For full details: <http://bit.ly/SEBzPW>

# Crisis Comm & Media Relations E-Newsletter

## July 10, 2010

### Special LeBron James Edition

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The best way to reach us is by calling 216-321-7774.  
 However, if your situation is **extraordinarily** critical, please call our 24/7 Emergency Crisis Comm Hotline at 216-223-8771.

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**LeBron James - The Chosen One Falls From Grace**

Not since Tiger Woods' late night car accident last Thanksgiving have we had so many phone calls and emails asking our opinion. Now, the calls are about LeBron James' decision to leave the Cleveland Cavaliers and go to the Miami Heat. From our perspective as crisis communications specialists, here's our take.

Perhaps it was inevitable that LeBron James would become a Villain in Cleveland if he signed with another team. But it wasn't simply his decision to leave Cleveland that was so egregious – it was the way he communicated that decision.

The crisis communications question under consideration is this: given his decision to leave Cleveland, did he have to become a Villain in the entire sports world? We think not.

From the moment the Cavs signed LeBron, his place in our hearts has been about more than his phenomenal basketball skills. We all cheered this young African-American who grew up in the Akron housing projects and yet seemed to have such poise about him. He was the embodiment of the American dream; an intelligent, gifted and very wealthy success story. And, let's face it -- he represented the best chance in years to bring a championship to Cleveland.

We liked LeBron – or at least the image that we thought was LeBron. So when he strung us along for months and refused to say where he would play next year, we gave him the benefit of the doubt. Surely he wouldn't abandon his home and his loyal fans, would he?

It was when we learned about the plans for a special on ESPN that everything changed. There was no explanation for that publicity stunt except for his enormous ego. You could sense the tide shifting. He's not who we think he is. He's been manipulating us into believing the hype. He's just like all the other athletes out there. We felt used and abused.

The announcement of the ESPN program caused many to look back at LeBron's actions over the previous few months in a different light. The way he played against Boston. His failure to return phone calls to Dan Gilbert after the Cavs lost. Making the NBA teams come to Cleveland to court him.

The ESPN special was so over the top, it was embarrassing. He hired someone to interview him on national TV where he would not have to look anyone in the eye or answer tough questions. He chose the location – far from Cleveland, far from his teammates, coaches and fans. And then, he shamelessly used a group of young children for his backdrop. What an example he set for those boys and girls! Please come and witness my betrayal. With that publicity stunt, LeBron James abruptly ended 10+ years of hero-worshipping media and fan adulation.

If you're a regular reader of our [Crisis Comm E-Newsletters](#), you know our mantra: "Tell the truth. Tell it all. Tell it first."

But we also advise our clients to tell bad news first to those who will be most affected and, if at all possible, tell them in person, face to face. If you're closing a plant, tell the workers who will lose their jobs. If one of your doctors harmed a patient, tell the family in person. Have the courage to look the person in the eye and say you're sorry and answer their questions. You owe them that much.

Instead, LeBron James chose to wear the Villain's crown in what we call the "3-V framework" (a narrative device commonly used by the media, featuring a Villain, Victim and Vindicator).

Again, did it have to end this way? Consider, for a moment, what Clevelanders and sports fans across the world might be saying today if he had simply told the truth, told it all and told it first – with class and dignity.

What if LeBron had treated the Cavs fairly and with respect, announcing in Cleveland -- in person -- that he would not be returning, personally thanking the fans, owner and team? He could have announced his decision to join the Heat and then, like every other athlete who's done this, answered questions from the media.

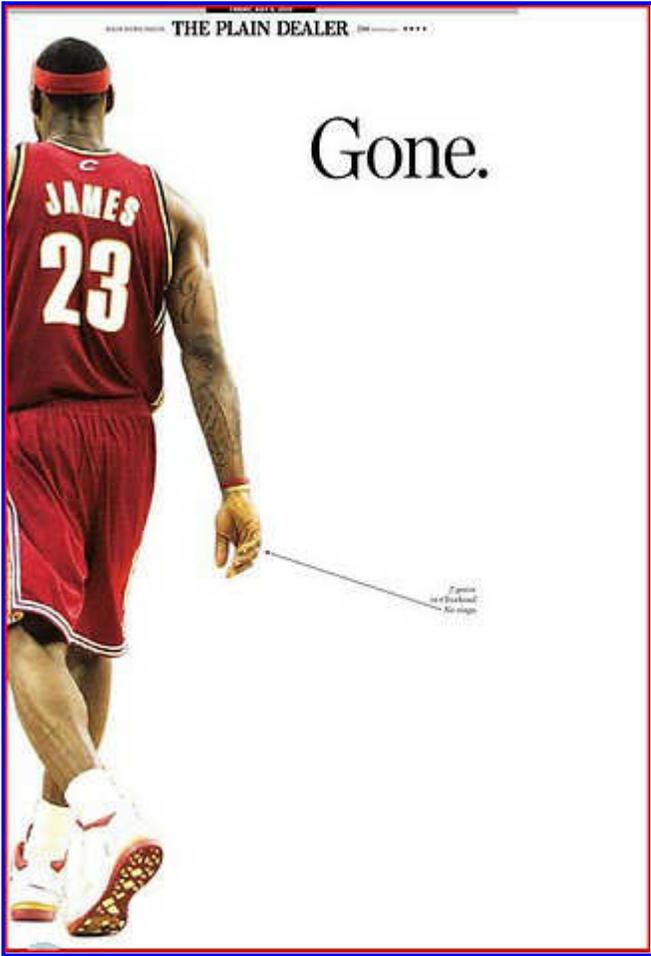
We would still have been disappointed in his decision, but hey, we'd still like him. Had he handled his free agency with class and dignity, how could we begrudge this 25-year-old the right to determine his own destiny.

**Barbara Paynter & Bruce Hennes**

For a quick tour of the media and punditocracy, check these out below...

The Plain Dealer <http://www.cleveland.com/lebron/>

Sports Illustrated <http://bit.ly/cy74CH> and <http://bit.ly/cfHmJE>





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**Check Out Bruce & Barb's Schedule....**

**9/21/10 Youngstown State University – Wean Nonprofit Summit (1 hour)**

**9/23/10 International Tire Exhibition & Conference (1 hour)**

**11/16/10 Society for Human Resource Management – Toledo (1 hour)**

**11/18/10 Senior Sales & Marketing Association (1 hour)**

**12/20/10 Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (4 hours)**

Managing the Media: Lawyers & The Press

Also presenting: Deborah Coleman, Esq. and Virginia Davidson, Esq.

**4/28/11 Eastern Stark County Safety Council (1 hour)**

NOTE: Most of the above are open-to-the-public. Some of the seminars are free; others require a fee, payable to the sponsoring organization. Please call or write us for further information.

Need a presenter for your next meeting or conference?

Let us help you make it the best ever.

Are you looking for an eye-opening, inspiring presentation for your next event?

If your organization, company or association is searching for something different—a content-packed, entertaining, how-to customized seminar on how to manage the media, then we should talk.

Do give us a call at 216-321-7774.

Don't just take our word for it. See what other people say about our seminars:

<http://www.crisiscommunications.com/testimonials.html>



### TV Newsman Michael O'Mara Joins Hennes Paynter Crisis Comm SWAT Team

Considered by many to be one of the premier television reporters in Cleveland – and certainly one of the most recognizable – Mike O'Mara joins the Hennes Paynter Crisis Comm SWAT Team as vice president, bringing more than 30 years of experience in media and law, having worked as an Emmy award-winning television news reporter, anchor and attorney.

"O'Mara has a unique set of skills and experience to offer our clients," said Barbara Paynter, partner at Hennes Paynter Communications. "With today's 24-7 news cycle, where the media focuses unrelenting critical attention on businesses, nonprofits, government agencies and other institutions, simply doing good work doesn't cut it. When you end up on the wrong end of a reporter's microphone, pen or keyboard, maintaining your reputation depends on a communications strategy combining traditional media know-how with social media strategies and legal experience. Mike O'Mara has the skills to help our clients tell their side of the story."

"O'Mara's previous experience in broadcast media, including a decade at WKYC-TV3, Cleveland's highly-regarded NBC affiliate, will be especially valuable in delivering results-oriented crisis communications, first-class media relations, strategic awareness campaigns and media training to support Hennes Paynter clients on the local, state and national levels," added Paynter.

For complete details: <http://www.crisiscommunications.com/>



## 11. Our Permanent Collection

**A. Our favorite blog on the subject of public and citizen preparedness.** Undoubtedly, you will find it helpful to you, your family, your

business, nonprofit, government agency and your community when it comes to preparing for emergencies -- big and small:  
<http://incaseofemergencyblog.com/> Written by John Solomon, he's also the writer of "It's An Emergency – We're Not Prepared," which can be read here (free registration required): <http://bit.ly/92Rq77>

**B. Our favorite book about Homeland Security is "Our Own Worst Enemy: Asking the Right Questions About Security to Protect You, Your Family, and America" by Randall Larson, director of the Institute for Homeland Security.** The book provides a solid, practical, logical approach to personal security for all Americans and explains why the government is not prepared to help us in a time of crisis. For more info: <http://bit.ly/6JQjuQ>

**C. As we learned on 9/11 and after Hurricane Katrina, when landline and cell phone telephone lines go down or are jammed to overcapacity, short text messages (150 characters maximum) can often get through.** This is because person-to-person voice phone calls basically require an "open pipe" while text messages occupy very little bandwidth and can be "lined up" for delivery. The easiest way to send a text message is cell phone to cell phone (for instructions on how to do so, we suggest you find a 13 year old – they all appear to be quite capable of texting).

You can also use your computer or Blackberry-type device to send a text message, also known as SMS, to a cell phone, just like a regular email. Here are the exact email addresses you can use to send computer-to-cell phone emails (the x's represent the cell phone's area code and phone number, without the "1" and without any dashes):

AT&T xxxxxxxxxxx@txt.att.net Nextel xxxxxxxxxxx@messaging.nextel.com Sprint xxxxxxxxxxx@messaging.sprintpcs.com  
T-Mobile xxxxxxxxxxx@tmomail.net Verizon Wireless xxxxxxxxxxx@vtext.com  
For a complete list of all cell phone company "texting domains", type in <http://bit.ly/ckqHNO>

WARNING: 1. Depending upon the recipient's cell phone contract, they may pay a few cents to send or receive a text message; 2. Sometimes computer-to-cell phone text message are nearly instantaneous, sometimes they can take hours to go thru the system. Best bet: we suggest you try sending a few computer-to-cell phone text messages now – before you need to do this in an emergency.

**D. Want a short refresher on crisis communications?** Check out this short, six-minute video of Bruce Hennes on the web: <http://bit.ly/dloCxI>

**E. Make a Plan: With ready.gov/business, the business you've worked so hard to build can be as prepared as possible should a disaster strike.** Download free, easy-to-use checklists, templates and other resources to help you develop an affordable plan. Protect your business or life's work - start or update your plan today. Becoming a success is hard work. Protecting it isn't. Here's how: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov)

**F. Emergency & Crisis Info: Do you live in Greater Cleveland? If so, you may be in range of these new, low-power, community and emergency information stations:** Mayfield Heights 1700-AM; Mayfield Village 1640-AM; Mentor 1620-AM; Beachwood 1630-AM.; Pepper Pike 1670-AM; Lakewood 1660-AM; Strongsville 1640-AM; Brunswick 1700-AM; and Westlake 1680-AM. In the event of an emergency, you will find these stations to be an important source of information. If you live in or near one of these communities, you should set your car radio button for one of these stations.

**G. When disaster strikes and telephone lines are jammed, how can you assure your critical calls go through?** The National Communications System (NCS), part of the Department of Homeland Security, offers priority telecommunications services to first responders, police, fire and rescue, public safety officials at all levels of government, and other national security and emergency preparedness personnel to ensure ongoing communications during crisis situations. Sign up today at [www.ncs.gov](http://www.ncs.gov) or call 800-NCS-CALL.

**H. Tell me, again, about crisis management:** <http://bit.ly/dBgpIT>

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**Did someone forward this e-newsletter to you? You can get your own subscription at no charge simply by sending your request to [hennes@crisiscommunications.com](mailto:hennes@crisiscommunications.com).**

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**Media Training & Coaching**

Your firm is in trouble...your CFO has been arrested...the company truck was in an accident...hackers hijacked your database...the pressure is on...the camera crew is at the door....

Do you know how to handle a high-pressure TV interview? Do you know where to look? What to wear? Where to put your hands? Do you look at the camera – or at the interviewer?

It takes a lifetime to build a reputation and only a few seconds to destroy one. In a split second you could find yourself in a position where you need to know how to handle the media or be a public spokesperson. Would you know what to do or how to respond?

More important – will you “manage the message” and advance the cause of your business, agency or nonprofit?

You can be certain the senior executives at virtually all of the Fortune 500 companies have been thru media training, working with a media coach, where they've learned to deal with adversarial situations with journalists. Perhaps it's time for you to learn this specialized set of media survival skills?

We also offer straight spokesperson & presentation training and coaching, which consists of ways to improve a spokesperson's skills and daily interactions with peers, subordinates, investors, journalists and other outside parties.

Call Bruce Hennes, Barbara Paynter and the staff at Hennes Paynter Communications today at 216/321-7774 and talk to us about media, spokesperson and presentation training and coaching for you, your top execs -- or anyone who might have to hold the fort down with a reporter until the appropriate spokesperson can be located.

Ask us, too, about how we can help you create, implement and test a crisis communications plan.

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**SPECIAL NOTE FOR ATTORNEYS**



**Managing the Media: Lawyers & The Press CLE**

In today's world of high-profile litigation, it is beyond dispute that law firms frequently retain PR consultants to help with media relations.

Our CLE, depending upon length, can include canons and case law surrounding the relationship between PR activities, PR counsel and the management of the media; establishing & maintaining "control of the message"; when a reporter calls - making point and not just answering questions; what reporters expect; what news makers should expect; defining and creating Key Messages; reporter's agenda vs. the attorney's agenda; the fundamental differences between print, television and radio interviews and how each require different skill sets; dealing with the press proactively and reactively; "off the record, not for attribution" and other advanced techniques; and creating relationships with reporters and editors.

Numerous law firms have brought us in to do one of our seminars; some have used our seminar for a marketing opportunity, inviting a large number of corporate counsel, as well as prospects for new business.

Call us at 216-321-7774 to discuss particulars.



### About Hennes Paynter Communications LLC

Hennes Paynter Communications is a crisis communications, media training and media relations consulting firm based in Cleveland. Serving corporations, government agencies, nonprofits and individuals who are “on trial” in the court of public opinion, Hennes Paynter Communications also offers litigation communication support and public relations services to their clients. The firm is a coalition member of ProtectingAmerica.org and National Preparedness Month (US. Department of Homeland Security).

We can be reached by calling 216/321-7774 or by email at [hennes@crisiscommunications.com](mailto:hennes@crisiscommunications.com).



### Administrivia

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**OUR FAVORITE QUOTE:** You simply can't communicate your way out of a situation you've behaved your way into (credit to Don Etling at Fleishman-Hillard for this insight).

### WARREN BUFFET'S 4-STEP CRISIS COMM STRATEGY:

- Get it right.
- Get it fast.
- Get it out.
- Get it over.

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**When your business or reputation is  
threatened,  
you need a specialist.**

**A crisis communications specialist.**



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