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Crisis Comm & Media Relations E-Newsletter

January 15, 2013

Now in our 11th Year of Publication

Winner of the 2012 Gold "Rocks Award" for best newsletter from the
Public Relations Society of America - Cleveland Chapter

[Bruce Hennes](#)   [Barbara Paynter, APR](#)  

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Our regular office number is 216-321-7774.

However, if your situation is [DEFCON 2](#) (critical and extraordinarily time-sensitive),
please call our 24/7 Emergency Crisis Comm Hotline at 216-223-8771.
If necessary, leave a voicemail and we'll get back to you within 30 minutes.



Manti Te'o

How was the media duped by the Manti Te'o "girlfriend" hoax?

The media is legitimately asking a lot of questions about whether Notre Dame linebacker Manti Te'o was duped or whether he was a willing participant in the bizarre hoax in which the death of a fake girlfriend became part of this year's best college football story (until the national championship game, that is). That's all well and good, but we want to know how so many members of the media were tricked into reporting this story about a non-existent girlfriend's tragic death. Did no one ask questions? Wasn't there a single reporter who looked for an obituary or tried to confirm the much-reported car accident that nearly killed her? In these days when everyone is on social media, did reporters ever wonder why they couldn't locate her fictitious siblings or other family members - or did they even try to confirm what Te'o and his father were telling them about her family?

It seems that reporters across the country were swept up by a compelling narrative about a football star overcoming incredible tragedy and performing heroically on the field. In the end, it's a classic tale that fits the sportswriters' favorite frame: a hero overcomes great odds to lead his team to victory. In his statement, Te'o called the situation "incredibly embarrassing" and "humiliating" but he's not the only one who should be embarrassed and humiliated. To add insult to injury, the ruse wasn't ferreted out by ESPN, Sports Illustrated or a major newspaper; it was the upstart sports blog, Deadspin, that exposed the hoax! Now that's humiliating.

Barbara Paynter

C.K.: "This is perhaps the goofiest "non-sports" sports story we've experienced since Tonya Harding."

M.G.: "I guess I'm not, for the moment, as interested in the question of why Te'o allegedly believed this story as I am in the question of why we all believed this story."

For a thoroughly literate, interesting and thus-far unique take on the Te'o story that is trying to occupy the same space as the Lance Armstrong narrative, check out [this article](#) co-written by Malcolm Gladwell (author of *Blink* and *The Tipping Point*) and Chuck Klosterman (former Akron Beacon Journal writer; now "Ethics" writer for The New York Times).

Lastly, how did Deadspin uncover and report the story that every other media outlet missed?

[READ MORE](#)



Lance the Liar

For more than 10 years, Lance Armstrong doped, lied, ruined careers, made fools of his supporters and threw his friends under the bus. But if you really want to know how I feel about Lance Armstrong and his chances for redemption, [check out my interview a few days ago on WKYC-TV, Cleveland's NBC affiliate](#).

As our colleague, Don Etling, said: you can't spin your way out of bad behavior. As my business partner, Barb Paynter, says: spinning is lying. And as I say: you can't erase a decade of bad behavior by kneeling at Oprah's knee.

Bruce Hennes

"Let the outrage end -- and the sensible conversation begin," says Jonathan Mahler on [Bloomberg.com](#).

What if Lance Armstrong were instead Lance Armstrong Inc., a corporation? He'd have additional tools at his disposal for the reputation-saving campaign he is embarking upon. Let's explore just how the crisis communications plan would be different for Lance the corporation versus Lance the celebrity. [READ MORE](#)



"Gun Violence" vs. "Gun Control"

[Associated Press Memo](#) *Romenesko*

"As liberals always do they'll twist language their way to make gun control "gun violence." And who can be against gun violence? "

- from a tweet on Twitter



From the Annals of Camera Chasing

[The Newtown Tragedy & Camera-Chasing](#) *Levick*

From our colleague, Gene Grabowski: To be fair, most plaintiffs' attorneys would never dream of capitalizing on a tragedy like the Sandy Hook massacre for publicity or financial gain. But while Irving Pinsky's \$100 million lawsuit against the state of Connecticut does not aptly represent the profession, it does highlight an increasingly essential element of every plaintiffs' attorney's practice. Few of them chase ambulances anymore; but nearly all of them chase the cameras when one seems nearby.

[Hennes Paynter Communications](#) is one of the few agencies in the U.S. focused exclusively on crisis communications. Contact us at 216-321-7774.



Colorado FAIL

[Kin of Slaying Victims Criticize Theater](#) *New York Times*

Here, a case study about how a large corporation can overlawyer a situation and reinforce their role as "villain."

Relatives of most of the people killed in an Aurora movie theater rejected an invitation to attend its reopening, calling it a "disgusting offer." The parents, grandparents, cousins and widow of 9 of the 12 people killed said they were asked to attend an "evening of remembrance" followed by a movie when the theater reopens. In a letter to the theater's owner, Cinemark, they criticized the company for not previously offering condolences and refusing to meet with them without lawyers.



Short Takes

[6 Places You'll Recognize From the Background of Every Movie](#)

Cracked.com

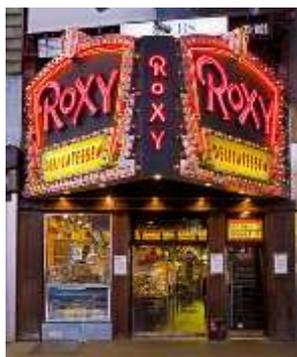
[Honoring the "First Flush" with Parades & Pull-Ups](#) *New York Times*

[The "Brain Gain Cleveland Project"](#)

Do you love Cleveland? If so, check this out.

[A Typographic Tour of New York City at Night](#) *Brain Pickings*

[Finding a Way to Talk About a Disquieting Condition](#) *New York Times*



Hennes Paynter Communications

Upcoming Events and Seminars

Join us for one of the crisis communications presentations below or contact us to customize one for your organization.

1/15/13 Construction Safety Council

1/31/13 Ohio College Personnel Association

2/12/13 Rotary Akron

2/13/13 Nonprofit Webinars

3/5/13 Stark County Safety Council

3/14/13 Cleveland Engineering Society Design & Construction Conference

3/15/13 American Bar Association Leadership Conference (2 hour plenary)

3/27/13 Cuyahoga Valley Chamber of Commerce

4/10/13 Buckeye Association of School Administrators

4/15/13 Burton D. Morgan Center for Entrepreneurship Research

4/16/13 Greater Cleveland Safety Council

6/25/13 Medina County Society for Human Resource Management

NOTE: Some 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.

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Need a Presenter for Your Next Meeting or Conference?

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. Don't just take our word for it - see [where we've talked before](#) and [what other people say](#) about our seminars.

Recent seminar sponsors include:

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BVU - The Center for Nonprofit Excellence
Columbus Bar Association
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Cuyahoga County Fire Chiefs Association
Cuyahoga County Police Chiefs Association
Holmes County Board of Health

Lakeland Community College
Licking County Safety Council
Lorain Cty. Society for Human Resource Mgmt.
Mansfield Economic Club
Maritime Attorneys of The United States
Ohio County Auditors Association
Ohio County Prosecutors Association
Ohio Mayors Association
Ohio Municipal League
Southern State Community College



Managing the Media: Lawyers & The Press CLE

As almost any general counsel of a large, publicly traded, consumer-oriented company will tell you, legal controversies today are tried in the Court of Public Opinion -- at least as much as in any Court of Law. Every organization, especially large, publicly-traded corporations, has much to gain (or lose) by the way a legal controversy is positioned in the media. Because the value of a company's reputation is immeasurable -- and perhaps its largest uninsured asset -- a corporation loses when the brand image is tarnished, even if the corporation technically wins at trial. Furthermore, since most legal controversies are settled prior to trial, the Court of Public Opinion has arguably become the most important battleground affecting not only good will and market share, but legal bargaining power and settlement negotiations. Managing this battleground, therefore, has become integral to many corporations' legal strategies.

Georgetown Journal of Legal Ethics, Vol. 22, 2009

In these days of 24/7 instant news, where Twitter and Facebook exponentially amplify crisis situations, organizations simply cannot wait until a legal decision is rendered. They must be prepared to vigorously defend their position in a wide variety of venues, as well as media outlets.

Hennes Paynter Communications works with corporations, government agencies, non-profits, schools, hospitals and educational institutions to communicate their way through legal and reputational challenges ranging from criminal charges and claims of medical and professional malpractice to plant closings, food and product liability issues, ownership and transition disputes that threaten the very existence of an organization. We are practiced in the art of working with attorneys and, in fact, are frequently brought in by attorneys who recognize the value we bring to the table. We often work with legal teams by immediately preparing for the Court of Public Opinion so they and their client are not declared "guilty" before they can even be heard in the Court of Law -- and sometimes, we can help forestall a situation from even spawning a court case at all.

The American Bar Association, numerous law firms and local bar associations have brought us in to do one of our seminars, including some who've used our seminar for a marketing opportunity, inviting a large number of corporate attorneys, as well as prospects for new business. Call us at 216-321-7774 to discuss particulars.



Crisis/Media Training & Coaching

Your organization 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? Will your messages survive the editing booth? Do you know where to put your hands? What to wear? 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 - do you have the necessary skill set to "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 through media training, working with a media coach to learn how to handle adversarial situations with journalists and stakeholders. Perhaps it's time for you to learn this specialized set of survival skills?

We also offer spokesperson & presentation training and coaching, designed to improve your daily interactions with colleagues, employees, investors, journalists and other outside parties.

Call Bruce Hennes, Barb 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.



Our Permanent Collection of Links & Tips

If you're a new subscriber to this e-newsletter, our [carefully-selected list](#) of links and tips will help you prepare for, and respond to, crisis situations.



**When your organization or reputation is threatened, you need a specialist.
A crisis communications specialist.**



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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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