

## Communicating Security: It's Your Job (web version).

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November 2011

Security professional, is your message important? Is making an impact an essential part of your job? Would the C-Suite and senior managers back your future plans when they know your efforts give good returns for their investment?

The "Communicating Travel Security: What you need to know, to tell others." session I presented at the ASIS' Intl Orlando conference and Danish Chapter's two "Career days" in September 2011 provided the participants with practical tools and insights to help them sharpen their communication skills. As a follow-up to those three sessions, this article will:

- Go over the session's main inputs and some of the outputs;
- Highlight the application of the Key Messages tool; and,
- Demonstrate how strategic use of this easy tool can improve your standing as a security professional.

It is an extended version of the [EuroDynamics article](#) (November 2011)

[http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=xr6u5xeab&v=001BwwB-ubl\\_EcLZ\\_Z9brwCbTKKaCjIzhfcsHqUxp4u6B6oeO30d4ZK3EIRYMCiW06CQtX5OIZImTuPbskWPccZdYHeYa-8vrlUe7ySseHFcGwXt4Aw0mikXSJABUHSRLNQ4hWo6Svrjyav5RXovtw%3D%3D](http://campaign.r20.constantcontact.com/render?llr=xr6u5xeab&v=001BwwB-ubl_EcLZ_Z9brwCbTKKaCjIzhfcsHqUxp4u6B6oeO30d4ZK3EIRYMCiW06CQtX5OIZImTuPbskWPccZdYHeYa-8vrlUe7ySseHFcGwXt4Aw0mikXSJABUHSRLNQ4hWo6Svrjyav5RXovtw%3D%3D).

As security professionals, we need to communicate as business partners, managers, trainers, and visionary leaders through various vehicles such as emails, briefings, policy papers, and phone calls. Hence, the session started with a brief input about the Communication Cycle:

- **Planning** (Who's it for? Set focus, define audience);
- **Packaging** (What's in it for me, the receiver/ the company? Content, impact audience);
- **Targeting** (How to best reach the audience? Audience's preferred channels, vehicles to reach out to the audience); and,
- **Monitoring & Evaluating** (Was the effort effective? Value for money, test for success).

For each phase, general examples were listed and a specific case from a global security awareness campaign that I worked on in May 2011 exemplified how to effectively use the cycle (to download the Orlando presentation, see the right sidebar of [www.trainingsolutions.dk](http://www.trainingsolutions.dk)).

The main focus of the sessions, however, was on the **Key Messages tool**. To use the tool, keep in mind a particular audience and follow the three steps:

1. Brainstorm all issues & points that could be included.
2. Categorize into "Must," "Should" and "Nice to Know" points.
3. "Must Know" points are the key messages need to be emphasized and repeated.

One way to improve your skills, as a communicator, is to draw your key messages from the insights gained in the Planning phase. These messages need to be featured through out the Packaging, Targeting, and M & E phases.

## OUTPUTS

To give a sense of the session's outputs after just over 10 minutes of group work, several examples are cited below. While it is not quite the norm to give group work during a conference presentation, I did it because the degree to which participants are activated directly affects their ability to retain the lessons learnt. Plus, past participants from ASIS European conferences in Montreaux and Copenhagen claimed the group work aided their subsequent networking.

Practice by doing gives a retention rate of 75% whereas a lecture gives only 5% - people cannot act on something they do not remember! That is a lesson worth remembering because the extent to which your company's staff follow security policies and procedures will be an important factor when senior managers and executives analyze the returns for their investments in your programs. (For the full list of retention rates, see page 23 of the session's presentation.)

This article will present a selection of the outputs from the three sessions, but it will mainly focus on the Orlando conference. The Orlando participants were given instructions for the Key Messages tool to use on the case:

You work for an international engineering and consulting company, which specializes within the pharmaceutical sector of emerging markets. Your responsibilities include managing the travel security for your company's multi-national staff of sales, technical experts, and managers who travel throughout Russia, Mexico and several Asian countries.

Worldwide, your company employs over 1,250 people. Of these 42% of them are North Americans. The rest of your staff come from a variety of nationalities and the majority of them work in their home country or region.

### Pick one audience

- Travelers to and within Mexico
- Travelers to and within Russia
- Travelers to and within Asian region

### Pick one topic

- Laptop theft and industrial espionage
- Kidnapping and extortion
- Cultural sensitivities and security

At the Danish Chapter's "Career Days" in participants either worked on the scenario above or one involving a family-owned Danish manufacturing company whose majority of employees are young and somewhat ethnically diverse.

From the two Orlando groups who selected "Kidnapping and Extortion" for Asia and Mexico, the brainstorm and key messages were:

**“Must Know”**

Asia	Mexico
- Dangers	- Emergency security contacts in-country/ home
- Reactions	- Situational/ cultural awareness
- Be aware	

**“Should Know”**

Asia	Mexico
- Politics	- How not to become a target – dress, behavior,
- Crime rate	- Transportation – air and land
- Culture of women	- Hotel and housing
- How to blend in	

**“Nice to Know”**

Asia	Mexico
- Economics	- Hostage survival
- Culture	

The Asia group’s key messages were “When traveling in Asia, be aware of your surroundings and warning signs; ensure you travel in groups; keep valuables in your hotel; blend-in and don’t wear flashy clothes or jewelry.” The Mexico group ended with a succinct “Be aware and Be safe” key message.

To further illustrate with two more Orlando examples, one group worked on cultural sensitivities and security for travelers to Russia and another Mexico group created a general travel awareness topic. It’s interesting that these two groups had some similar “Must Know” points: These were ground transportation and to know culturally specific behavior (meet & greet). In addition, the Russia group also had immigration procedures, whereas the Mexico group added hotels, emergency contacts and to keep a low profile.

The Danish “Career Days” participants had a modified version of the Orlando scenario that also gave them the choice of selecting Danish staff who are now required to travel further a field. One group brainstormed for that audience:

- Minimum security in hotels – fire, personal security, knowledge about the location.
- Contacts and reporting – back ups.
- Awareness at airports, crowded places – personal belongings.

During the lessons-learnt discussion, it was noted that it “depends on the risk analysis.” The main lesson for a group who worked on Fire Safety Awareness for the predominately young Danish manufacturing staff was the suggestion to “Update emergency plan’s training.” This was derived from identifying such points as “how to trigger the fire alarm” and “knowing where the assembly points are” as “Must Know” items. The Key Messages tool not only is a communication tool, it can give insights into the better management of your company’s security. Arguably, insightfulness communicated strategically can benefit your career.

If this session was part of a workshop for security professionals, then time for the group work would be longer and extra time for an interactive and challenging plenary session would give more opportunities for cross-sharing and learning. For example, I would point out that, in regards to delivery, the Asia group’s key messages could have more impact if they restarted the Key Messages tool for the different subject areas (awareness, hotel) so the resulting advice is categorized and targeted. If we reflected back on the

Packaging phase of the Communication Cycle, then answer “What’s in it for the receiver?” Reach the right audiences with targeted advice: It’s efficient.

With the global security awareness campaign example, the ACT Alliance’s Security Working Group used various means (i.e. e-learning DVD, generic guidelines) to get across different security messages. This ended with many of the early versions of the posters being overloaded. When the branding subgroup, which I headed, started to work on the poster there were five different daily posters. Because this would have required high staff time and production costs, there would have been a risk that the branches would resent the top-down demands on their limited resources. Instead, at the end of two hours, we derived a single “See it. Hear it. Speak it. ACT it. Security is YOUR Responsibility” poster – It is available in three of the Alliance’s languages and in an electronic form that can be modified for different languages, additional text and logos (to see the poster, go to the right sidebar of [www.trainingsolutions.dk](http://www.trainingsolutions.dk) for the Orlando presentation). Always strive to have your communications as user-friendly as possible. Utilize the Key Messages tool in ways that assist you in that process.

At a workshop that aims to support security professionals with becoming better communicators, it’s important to have challenging and interactive discussions that investigate questions like: “For each vehicle (emails, guidelines, intranet articles), what are ways to make the messages user-friendly?” I would suggest that litmus tests for ‘punchier’ messages are: “Can it be a citation at the end of your emails?” and “Can it be ‘the hook’ on a poster?” But, that raises other questions like: “How much can a Key Message can be condensed before it does not actually mean anything to the end-users?” At such a course, there are the underlining questions of “How can what I learn from this TOT help my career? “What’s the ROI?”

## APPLICATION

Aim to have your “Must Know” points featured and repeated in the communication: Where space allows it, the communication could then also include “Should Know” points, prioritized ahead of the “Nice to Know” items. My ‘rule of thumb’ for a training session, for example, is 3-5 key messages. When I write for the Facebook fan page for my travel security book, I generally aim for 1-5 points. My video blogs are full of “Must and Should Know” points since they need to appeal to a broader audience.

A training session of 45-75 minutes can easily bear 3-5 “Should Know” and a couple of “Nice to Know” points. These additions, however, should not take too much space from the repetition of the key messages. The point I emphasize in my hostile environment sessions, from the 30-45 minute grenade drill up to the 3-4 hours on extreme threats (i.e. crossfire, aerial bombardment), is “Get Down!” As I say, by standing alive, they can figure out how to follow the other key advice.

If you are responsible for overall security management, it is important to note that a range of vehicles should be used to transport your policy and procedural key messages. To take an example from one of my clients, I trained HQ travelers and a few hundred branch staff in the grenade drill, I wrote a personal security e-news with 4 do’s and 2 don’ts, and for all the countries where grenade bombings are a potential threat, I make sure the local security guidelines have the key advice, though contextualized. After the Nairobi grenade bombings at the end of October 2011, I re-sent the bombing e-news to the Nairobi based staff. I use various vehicles to continuously boost retention rates. This systematic approach helps my client meet their duty-of-care obligations.

## STRATEGIC

While the Orlando session used travel security as a backdrop, the Key Message tool can (and should) be applied to other aspects of your work. As one of the participants from an international pharmaceutical company later emailed me:

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*"Your presentation, by the way, was very informative and while I do not lead this particular discipline within our Unit, I did meet with the Senior Manager who does, and conveyed some of its "take a ways". The complete presentation will only buttress my note taking and hopefully provide an enhancement to our Program."*

Another participant from the food industry sent the Linked-in message:

*"Your session in Orlando was one of the most informative I attended - and I got there by accident. My nearby session was canceled. My arthritis was letting me know it was in charge that day. The door was open to your session and the chairs looked comfortable. What a pleasant surprise!"*

To end with this article's key message: Your career in security is important, so sharpen your communication skills with the Key Message tool. It has helped mine – I was elected Co-chair and I am the Chair-elect after my work on the global security awareness campaign. I am currently developing two training projects for the alliance: A high-level security TOT for the Security Working Group and I am drafting standardized course materials and facilitator's notes for personal security and security management workshops that can be utilized by the 125 member organizations and the hundreds of partner agencies they work with – Dream projects for me. My efforts add to my client's profile in the global alliance, which, in turn, contributes to them achieving their organizational goal of being active and influential within the alliance. The C-suite is pleased.

To attend a "Communicating Security" session, you can either have your ASIS chapter contact Tanya Spencer <[TanyaSpencer@TrainingSolutions.dk](mailto:TanyaSpencer@TrainingSolutions.dk)> or join the session at the ASIS European conference in London (April 2012).