

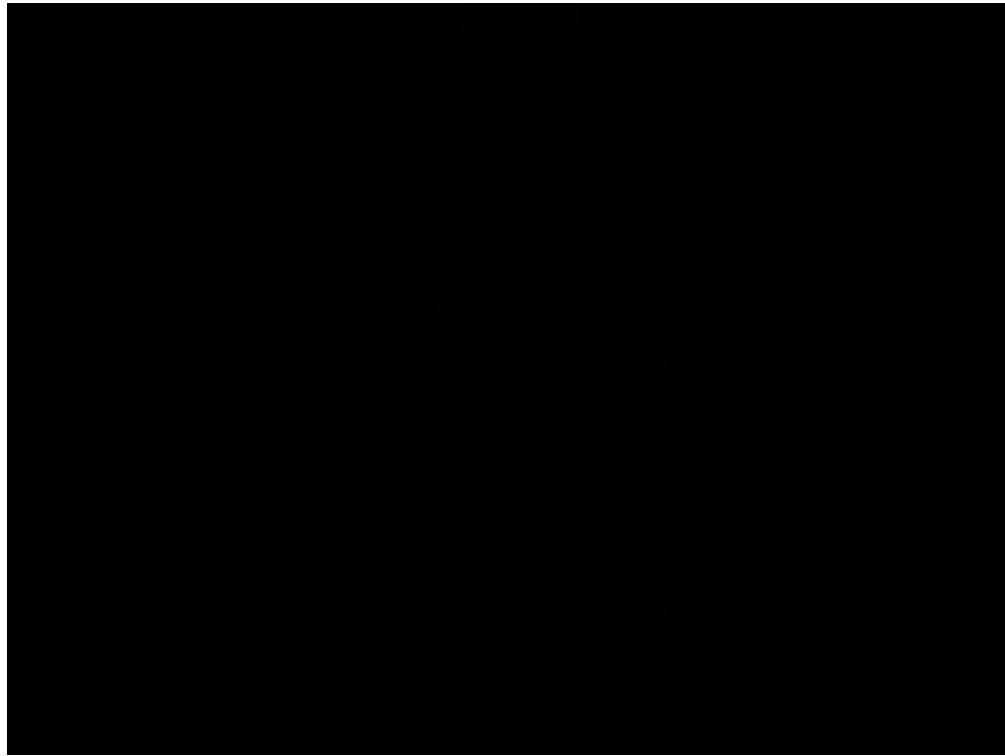
4-6 October, Nationals Park, Washington DC



Repairing Reputations
Crisis communication and project management
Merritt Hamilton Allen / Vox Optima LLC



When you make it up as you go along...



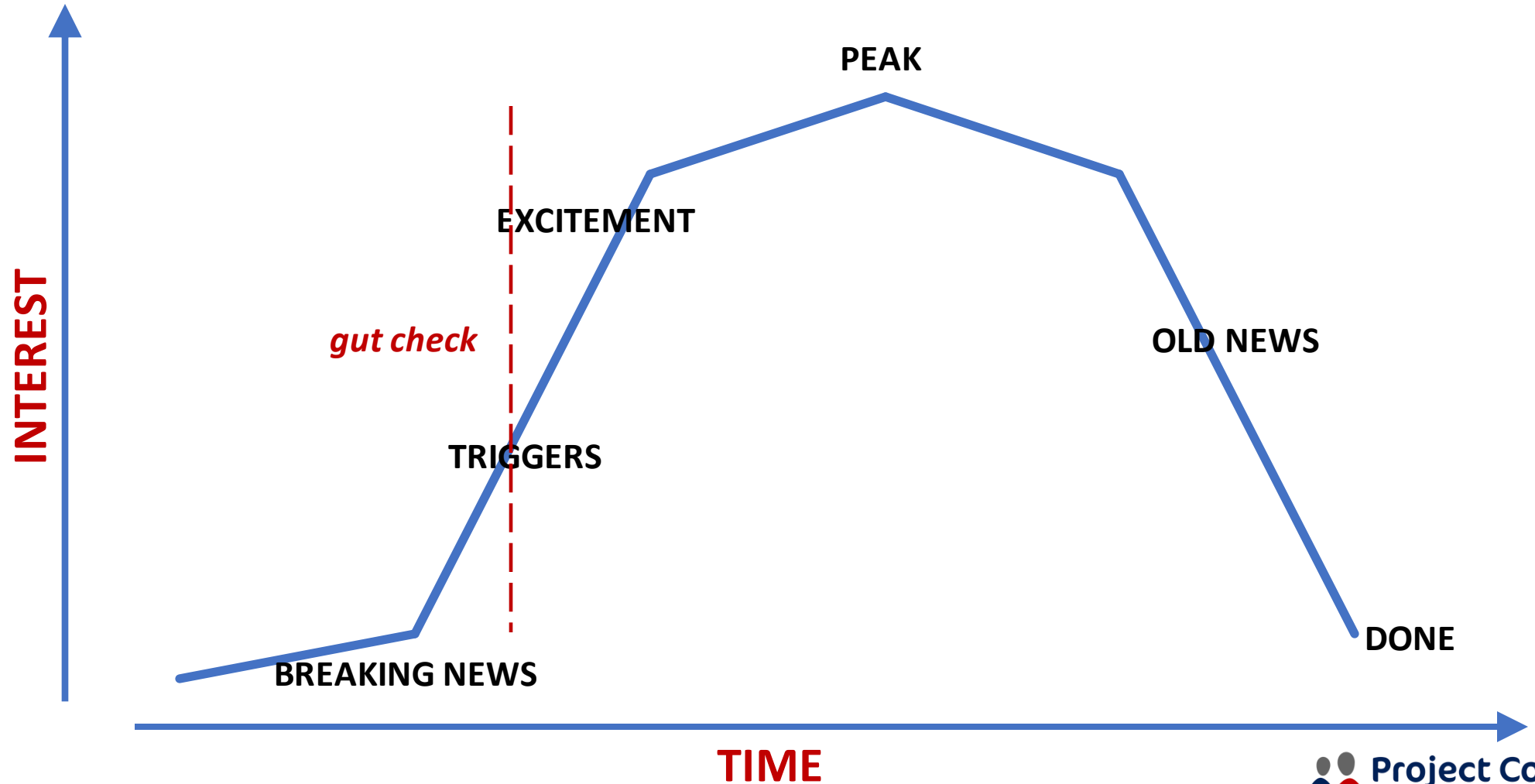
Crisis communication and project management

- Prepare and train
- Anatomy of a crisis
- Crisis gut check
- Preparing the message/messenger
- Managing the message
- 2022 case study

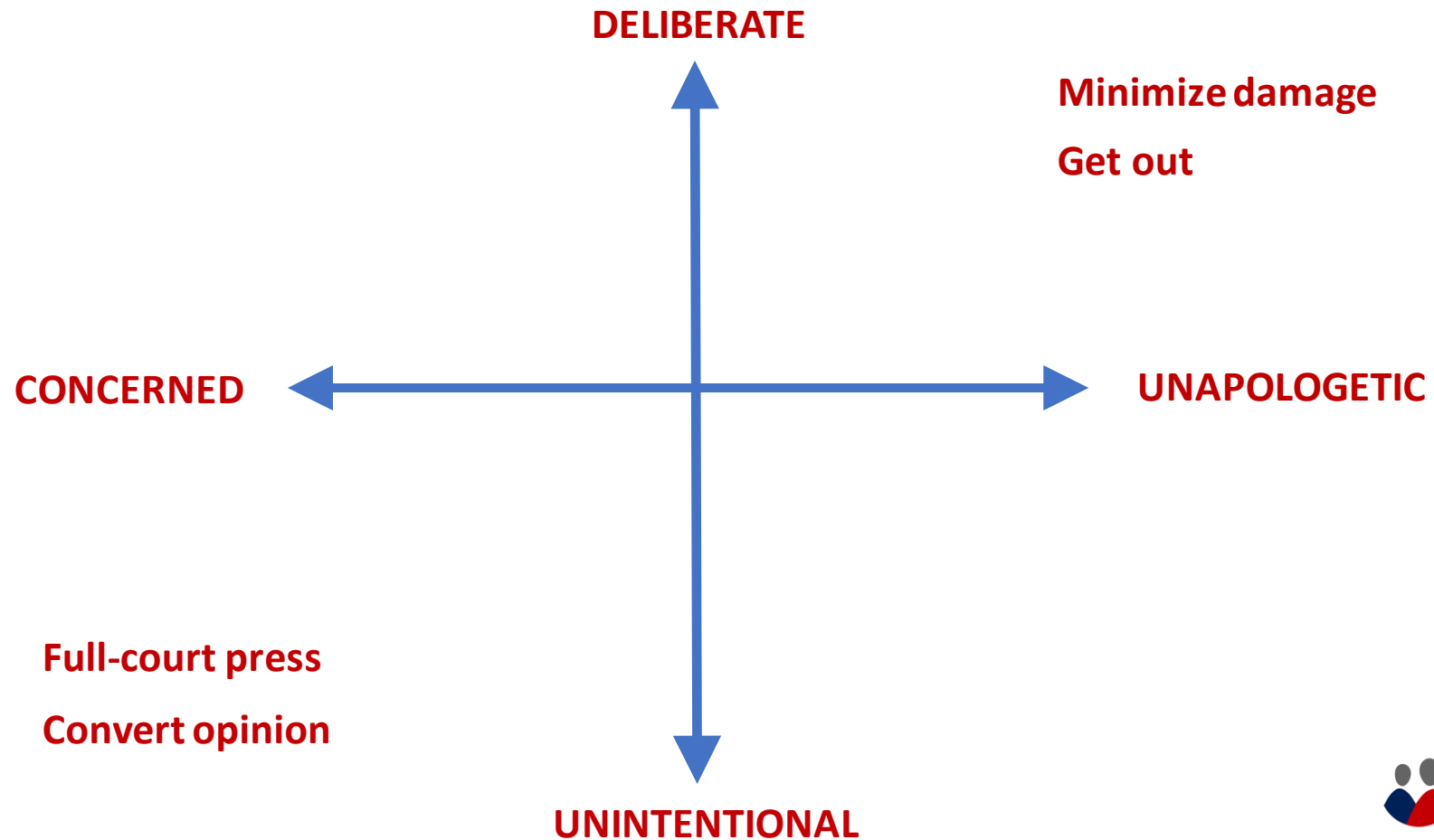
Prepare. Train. Repeat.

- Make communication part of your crisis planning
- Train for it
- Practice makes perfect
- “Transparent” does not mean “not strategic”

Anatomy of a Crisis



The gut check: where does your crisis fall?



The gut check: this is okay.

Hesitation

Caution

Risk assessment

Legal review

Coaching

Bringing in outside help

The gut check: this is not okay.

“No comment”

Looking to sell the story

Changing the story to change perceived acceptance

Deliberate omission of legal or liability facts

Lying

Preparing the message

Identify desired outcomes

Identify the spokesperson

Build a credible, authentic and relatable message

Coach the spokesperson

Prep the audience and/or media

Preparing the landscape (where possible)

Corral, empower and motivate allies

Build coalitions

Neutralize or at least outflank enemies

Control the setting for engagement

Do as much work for the press as possible

Realistic outcomes

Correct the record

Maintain positive opinion

Crystallize neutral opinion

Neutralize negative opinion

Effective spokespeople

Credible

Compassionate

Relatable

Authentic

Compelling messages

Incorporate emotion

Admit mistakes

Reassure audience steps are being taken

Offer a solution

Answering the hard questions: this is okay.

Bridging to your talking point

“I understand your concern...”

Flagging your talking point

“The most important thing is...”

Hooking with your talking point

“We have taken care of this....”

Answering the hard questions: this is not okay.

Blocking

“I did not have sex with that woman...”

Counter-accusations or false victimhood

“This is a witch hunt...”

Repeating or introducing a negative

“I am not a crook...”

Answering the hard questions:
this is NEVER okay.

Lying or misleading press, customers or stakeholders.

Before the engagement

Spokesperson prep:

Cosmetics

Commercials

Consistency

Media prep:

Questions in advance

Previous coverage

Other guests?

Producer conversation

Case study: military fuel facility

80 years old

Too many operational stakeholders

Command

Engineering and maintenance

Military housing and facilities

Day-to-day operation and supply chain

Sits above aquifer providing potable water for 41,000 people

What could go wrong?

The inevitable fuel leak

Caused by engineering contractor

Core messages:

Command – who do I fire?

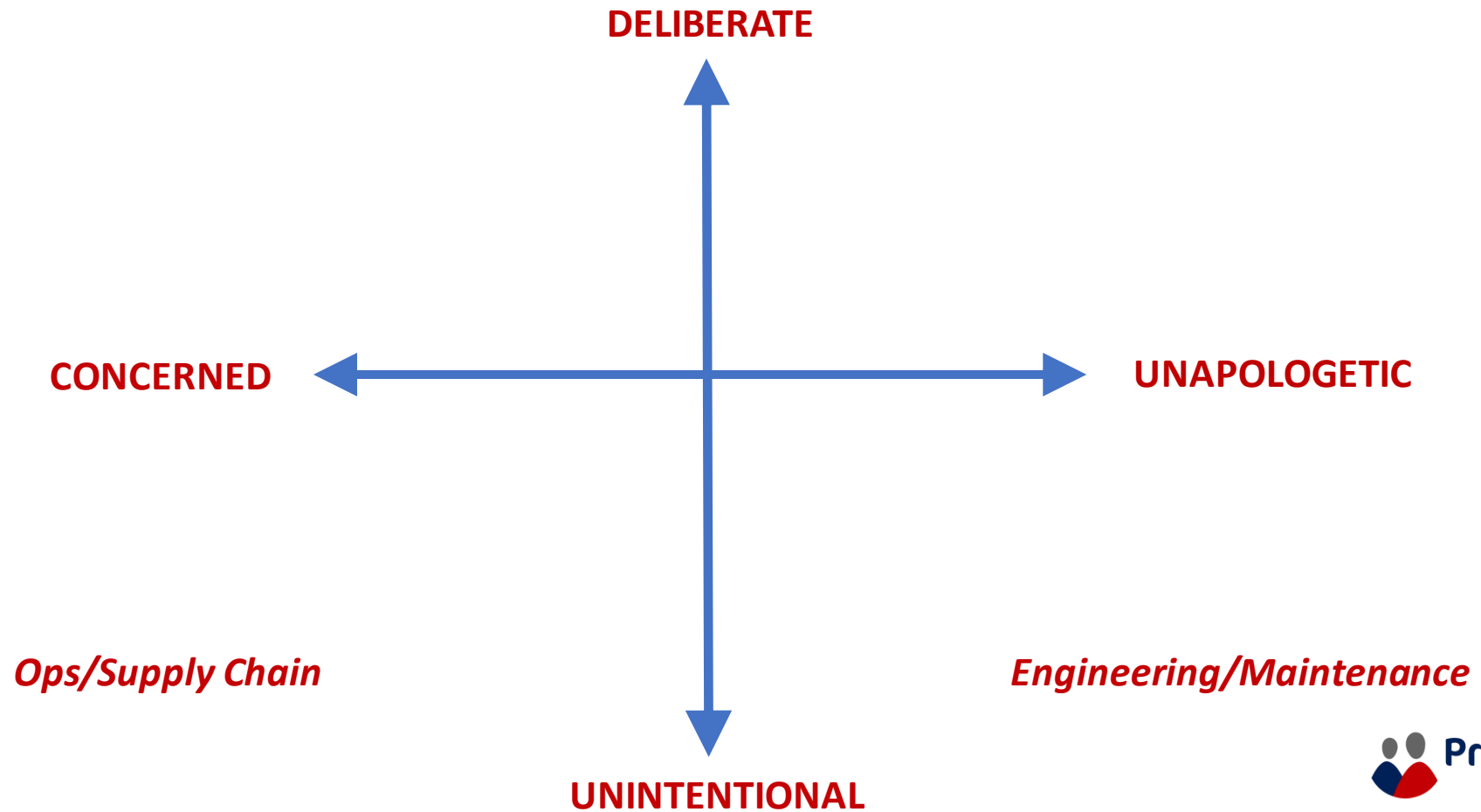
Engineering /maintenance – what a terrible mishap; get this off of me

Military housing and facilities – I did not cause the fuel leak

Day-to-day operation and supply chain – let's solve this and tell the truth

The only admiral who sounds at all credible is?

The gut check



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THANK YOU