

CHEAT SHEET: A mutual gains approach to managing stakeholder outrage

Principles of the mutual gains approach *	Strategies for managing stakeholder outrage **					
1. Acknowledge the concerns of the other side.	1a: Acknowledge the uncertainty.	1b: Stake out the middle ground.			1c: Co-opt the criticism.	
2. Encourage joint fact-finding.	2: Encourage stakeholders to assess the situation.					
3. Offer contingent commitments to minimize impacts if they do occur, and promise to compensate knowable but unintended impacts.	3: Write a contract that addresses the concerns of your critics.					
4. Accept responsibility, admit mistakes, and share power.	4a: Accept moral responsibility.	4c: Acknowledge prior misbehavior.	4d: Acknowledge current problems.	4e: Prefer "stupid" to "evil".	4f: Share control with third parties.	4g: Look for opportunities to collaborate.
	4b: Practice relentless contrition.					
5. Act in a trustworthy fashion at all times.	5: Emphasize accountability over trustworthiness.					
6. Focus on building long-term relationships.	6a: Seek forgiveness.		6b: Give away the credit.		6c: Position your organization as responsive – and not necessarily responsible.	

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Winning without fighting ***

"To win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." —Sun-Tzu

"... well-fought controversies are battles between the outrage-increasing extreme and the outrage-reducing middle."
— Peter M. Sandman

1. **Stake out the middle ground** in the risk controversy.
2. **Acknowledge the complexity** of the situation and the possibility that we are to blame
3. **Avoid over-reassurances** to the public.
4. **Acknowledge our uncertainty** as well as the concerns of our most acerbic critics.
5. **Assume moral responsibility** without taking legal responsibility.
6. **Apologize for our misbehavior**, past or present.
7. **Aim to be truthful and candid.**
8. **Give our harshest critics every opportunity** to declare themselves victorious – because that is the shortest and clearest path to putting the dispute to rest and restoring our reputation.
9. **Help our internal stakeholders to manage their own outrage** by keeping them informed as we pursue this strategy.
10. If necessary, **employ the Stupidity Defense**, with the understanding that it is better for our organization to be portrayed as stupid than as evil.
11. Above all, very publicly do all we can to **protect the community** even if it turns out we are not at all responsible for the problem.

***Based on the work of Peter M. Sandman