

Checklist for Step 1 of message mapping: Assess stakeholder outrage

When you need to assess outrage among stakeholders in a given risk controversy, you should work through this list of primary and secondary factors that trigger community outrage. Ask the key questions and answer each with a yes or no. This should help your team to narrow down the factors are generating the outrage. This checklist is based on the work of risk communication consultant Dr. Peter M. Sandman (<http://www.psandman.com>).

Primary factors	Key questions	Yes/No	Comments
Coerced	Do stakeholders feel they are being forced to accept the hazard?		
Industrial	Is the hazard created by humans and not by nature?		
Exotic	Do stakeholders consider the hazard to be outside their experience?		
Memorable	Do stakeholders express the hazard in images, metaphors, icons, slogans, or nicknames?		
Dreaded	Are stakeholders expressing fear or disgust about the risk?		
Catastrophic	Do stakeholders believe the hazard outweighs any perceived benefit?		
Unknowable	Is the hazard beyond the stakeholders' perceptions?		
Controlled by others	Do stakeholders lack any control over the hazard or its effects?		
Unfair	Are stakeholders assuming the risk while others are enjoying most or all of the benefits?		
Morally relevant	Does the situation offend the stakeholders' moral code?		
Untrustworthy	Do stakeholders doubt your organization's honesty?		
Unresponsive	Do stakeholders believe they have been excluded from the decision-making process?		

Secondary factors	Key questions	Yes/No	Comments
Vulnerable populations	Does the risk appear to harm the elderly, the very young, the sick, the poor, or the otherwise helpless?		
Delayed effects	Do stakeholder believe the risk can strike them without warning?		
Effects on future generations	How could this risk harm stakeholder families in the long term?		
Identifiability of the victim	Can critics personify the risk through a single, easily recognizable victim?		
Reduction of risk	Do stakeholders want to eliminate the risk, not merely reduce it? (The answer is always yes.)		
Risk-benefit ratio	Does the community believe its sacrifice outweighs any overall benefit to society?		
Media attention	Are news media likely to take and interest and attempt to amplify existing outrage?		
Opportunity for collective activism	Are stakeholders likely to take a group action against you?		

Source: Sandman, P. (1993). Responding to Community Outrage: Strategies for Effective Risk Communication. Fairfax, Va.: American Industrial Hygiene Association. <http://petersandman.com/media/RespondingtoCommunityOutrage.pdf>