

The 'Rule of Holes' and Other Survival Tips for the Risk Communication Jungle

Facilitator's Exchange & CPCX Webinar Series

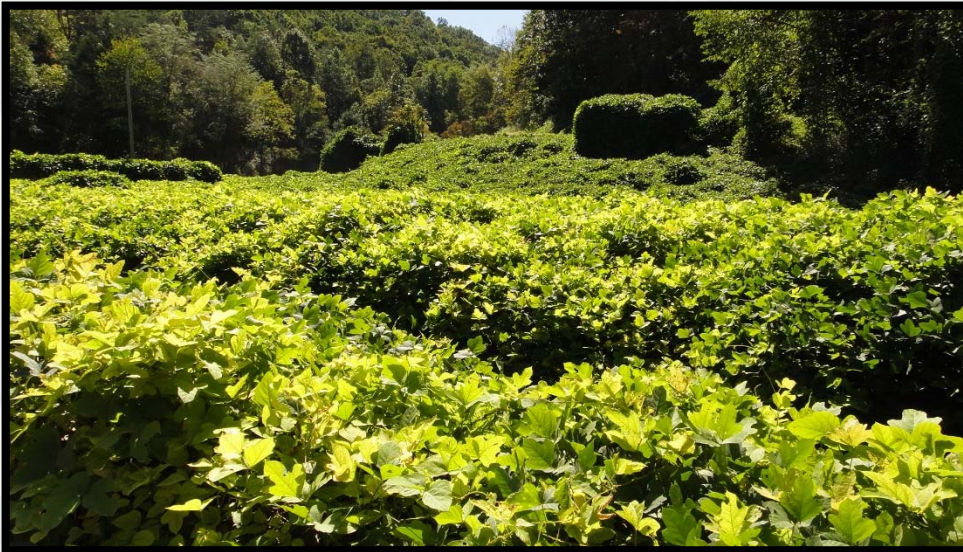
*21 September 2016
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EM CX*



US Army Corps of Engineers
BUILDING STRONG



Webinar Objectives



Recognize potential pitfalls in the risk communication jungle

Learn techniques to avoid them



Risk communication is the open, two-way exchange of information and opinion about hazards and risks leading to a better understanding of the risks and better risk management decisions. Risk communication is integrated into the assessment and management processes. It is not a task that occurs only after decisions have been made. Risk communication ensures that the decision makers, other stakeholders and affected parties understand and appreciate the process of risk assessment and in so doing can be fully engaged in and responsible for risk management.

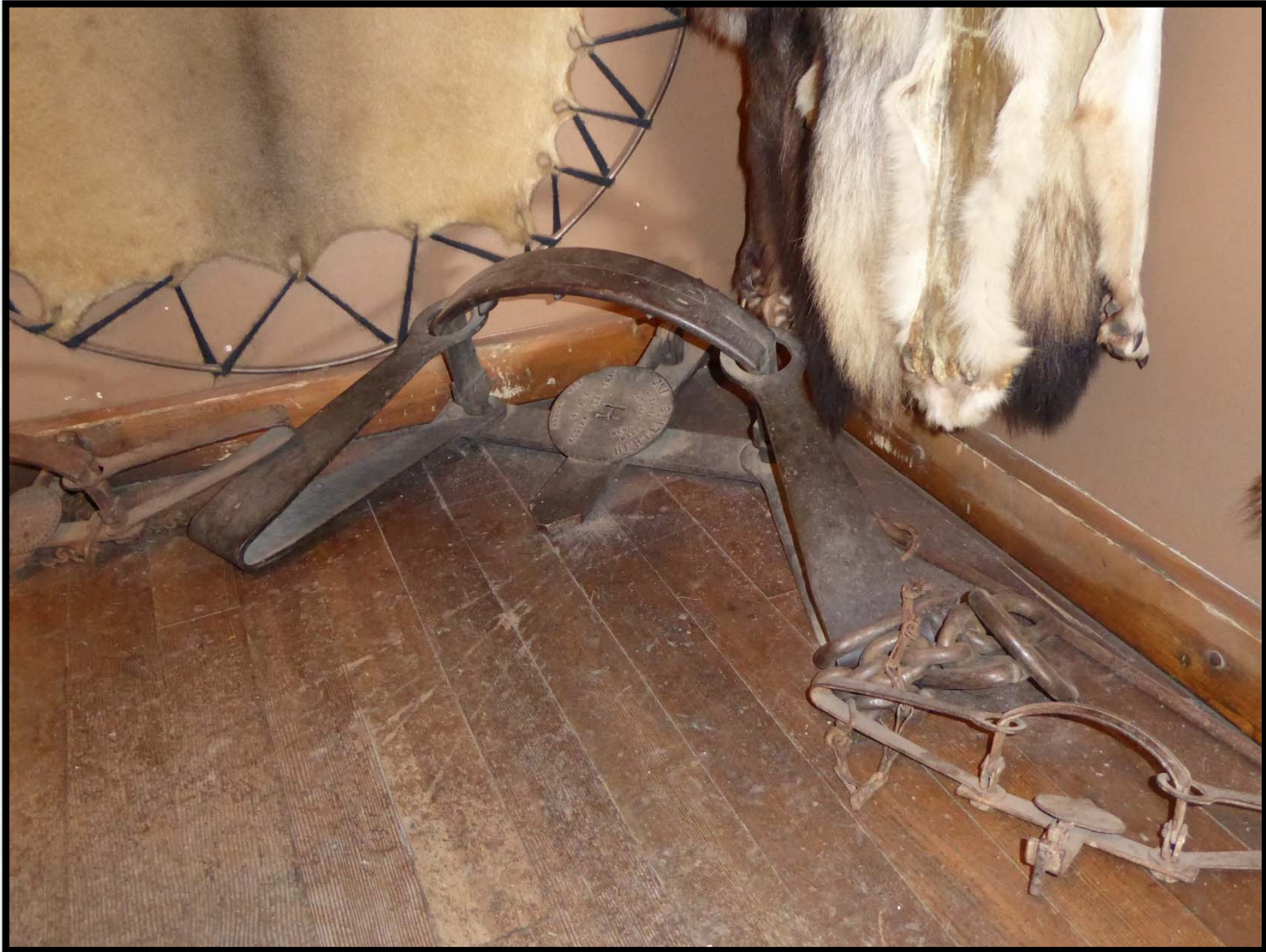
- Transforming the Corps into a Risk Managing Organization



What is Risk Communication?

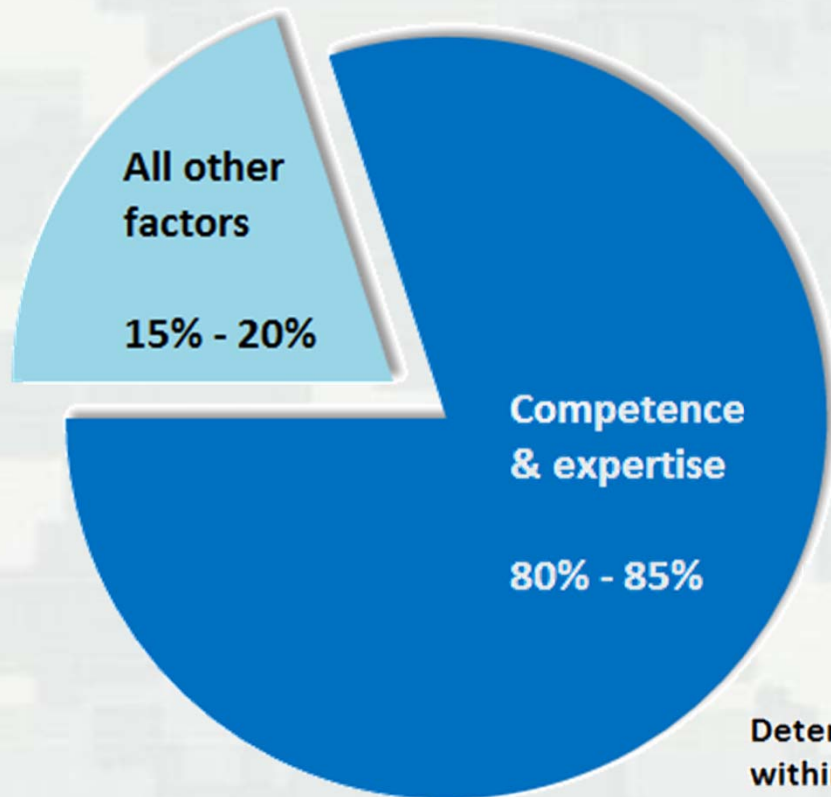
Risk communication is communicating with any stakeholder, internal or external, on any issue that could impact your organization's mission.



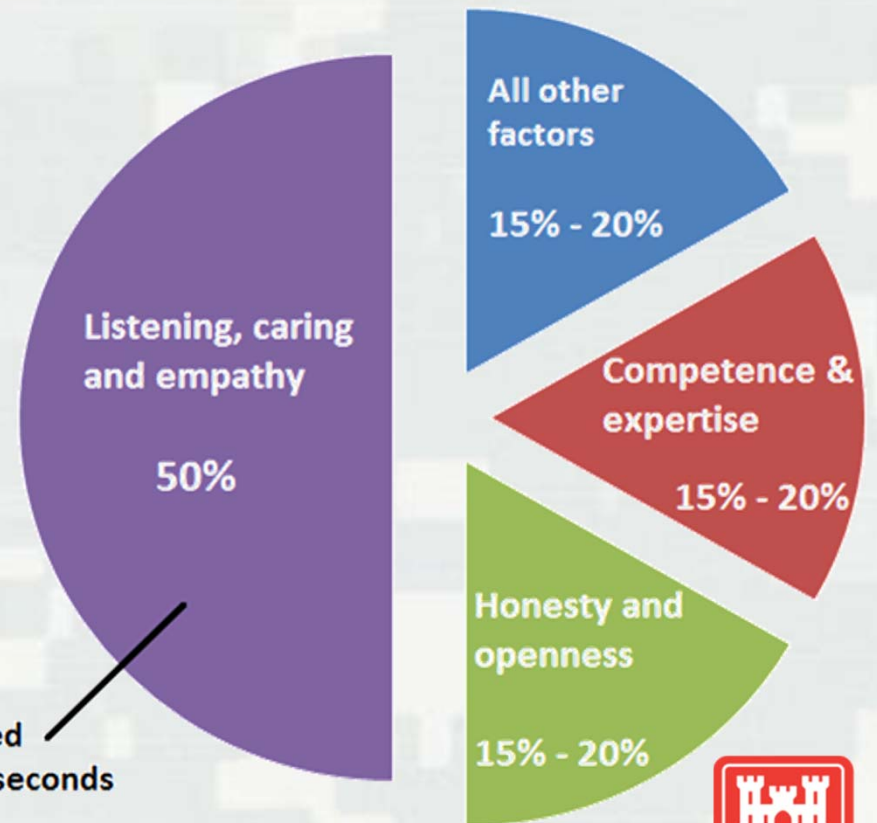


Factors that Affect Audience Trust

Low Stress Situations



High Stress Situations



Determined within 30 seconds



Source: Vincent Covello

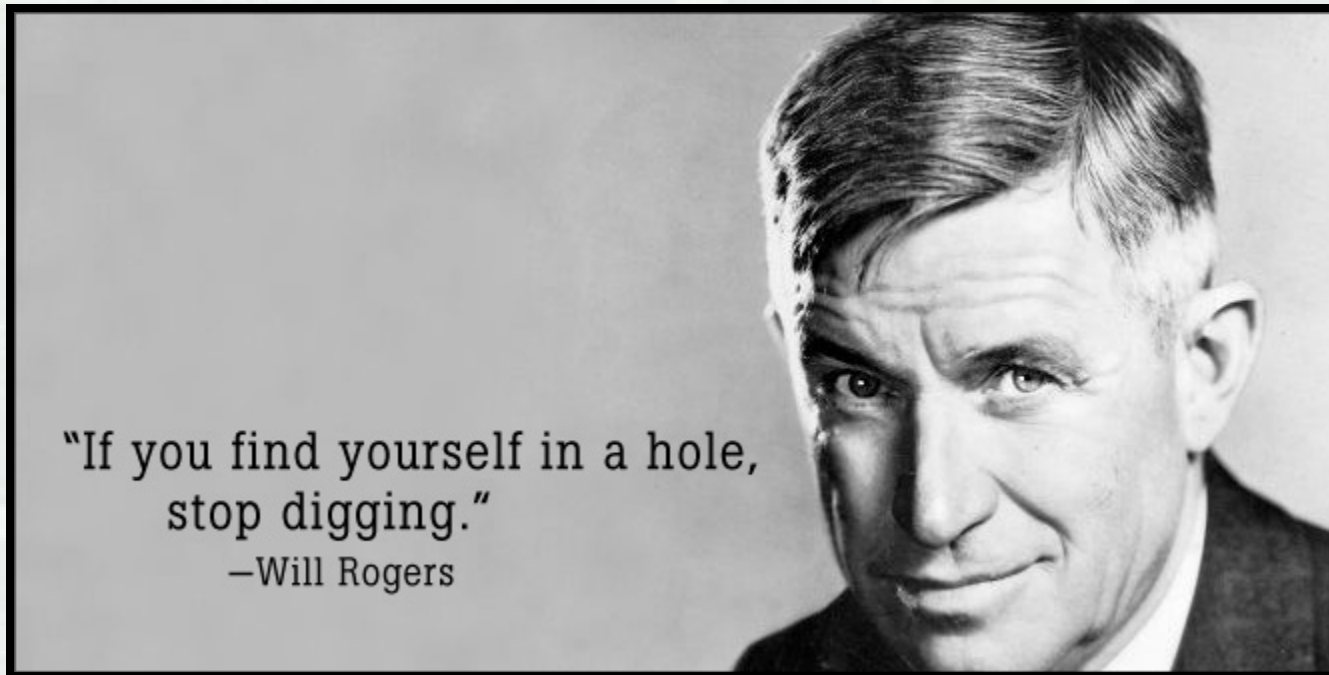
Communication Shifts in LOW to HIGH Stress Situations

LOW STRESS	HIGH STRESS
Process an average of seven messages	Process an average of three messages
Information processed in linear order (1, 2, 3)	Information processed in primacy (1,3,2) or recency order (3,2,1)
Information processed at average grade level	Information processed at minus four grade levels
Focus on competence, expertise and knowledge	Focus on listening, caring, empathy and compassion

Source: Vincent Covello



The 'Rule of Holes'



To Crawl Out of A Hole



Big ears, big eyes,
little mouth

Empathy



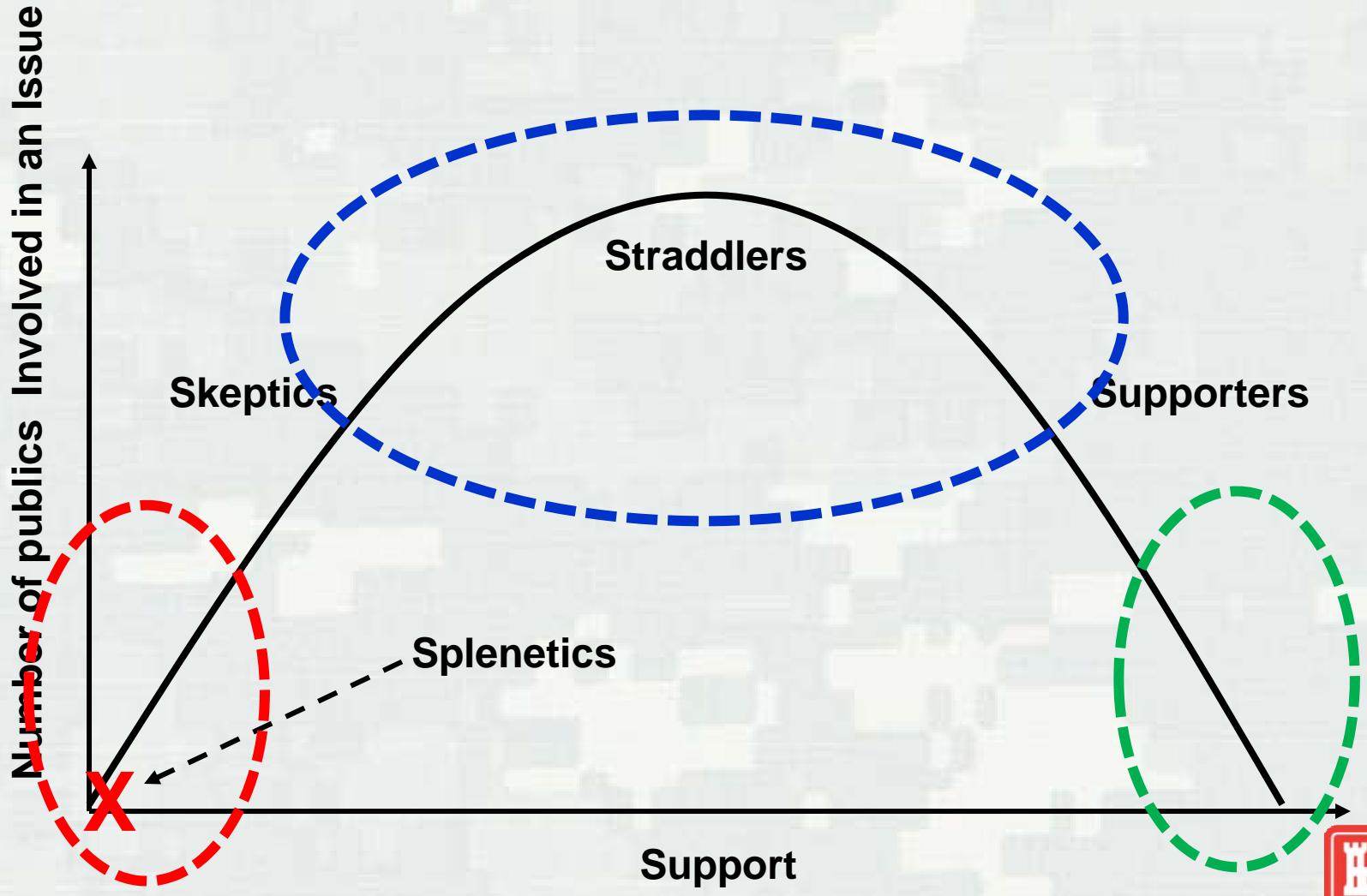
Communication About Risk Can Be Derailed By

- Not knowing the stakeholders
- Lack of transparency
- Not admitting mistakes
- Not getting in front of a problem
- Not having the skills to handle anger, fear and rudeness
- Falling into the Risk Communication traps
- Lacking non-verbal observation skills

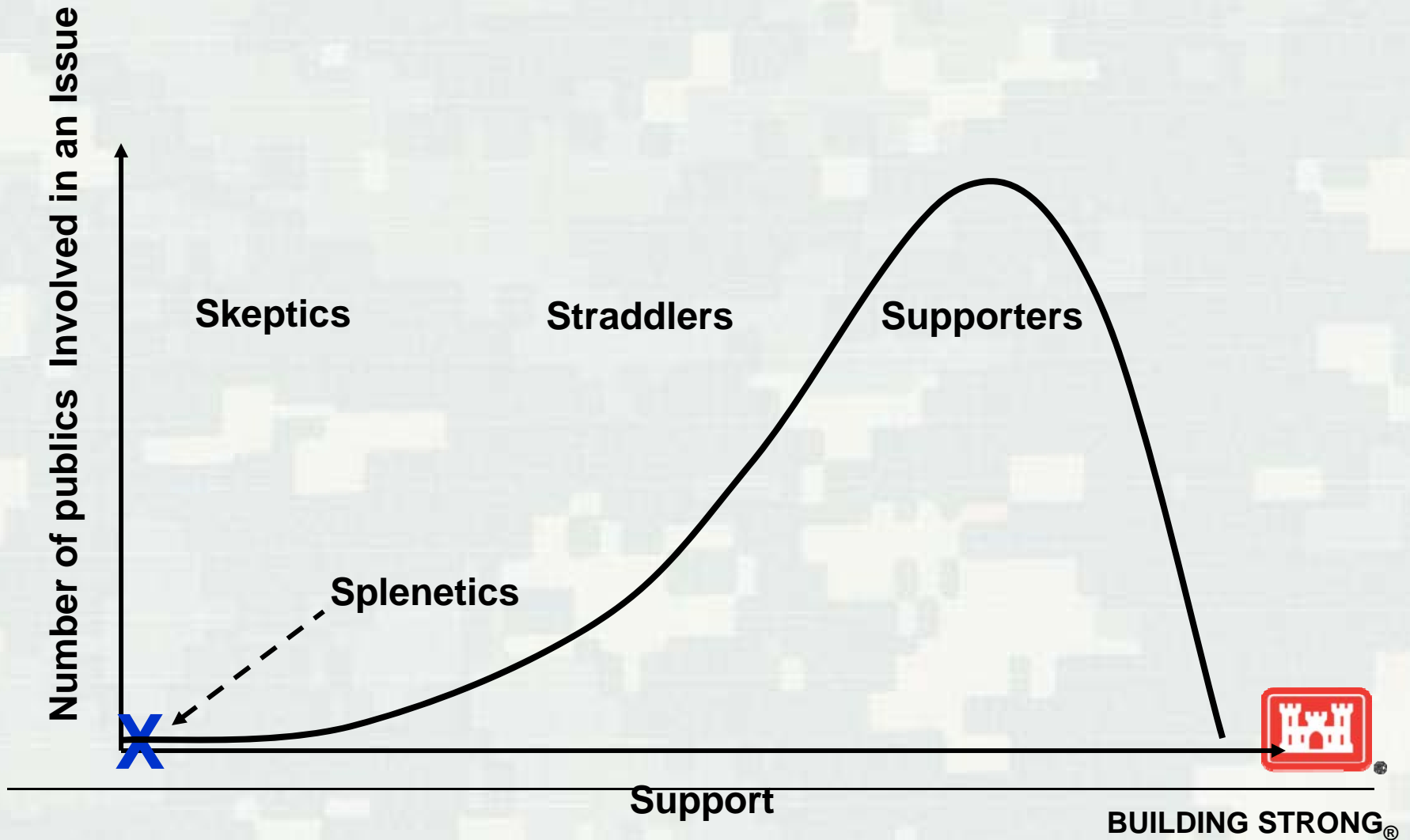
Cultivate Trust and Respect!



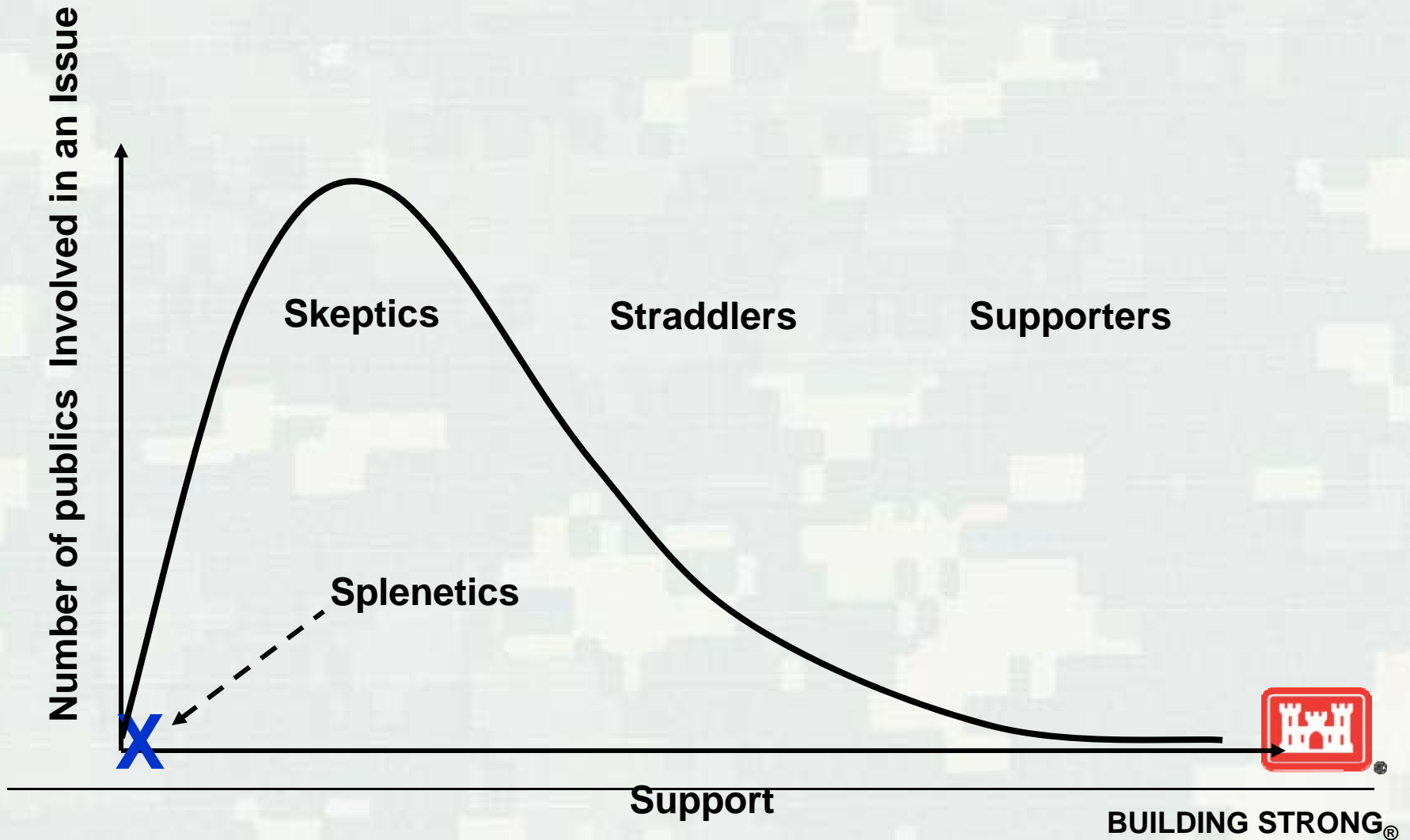
Splenetics Curve



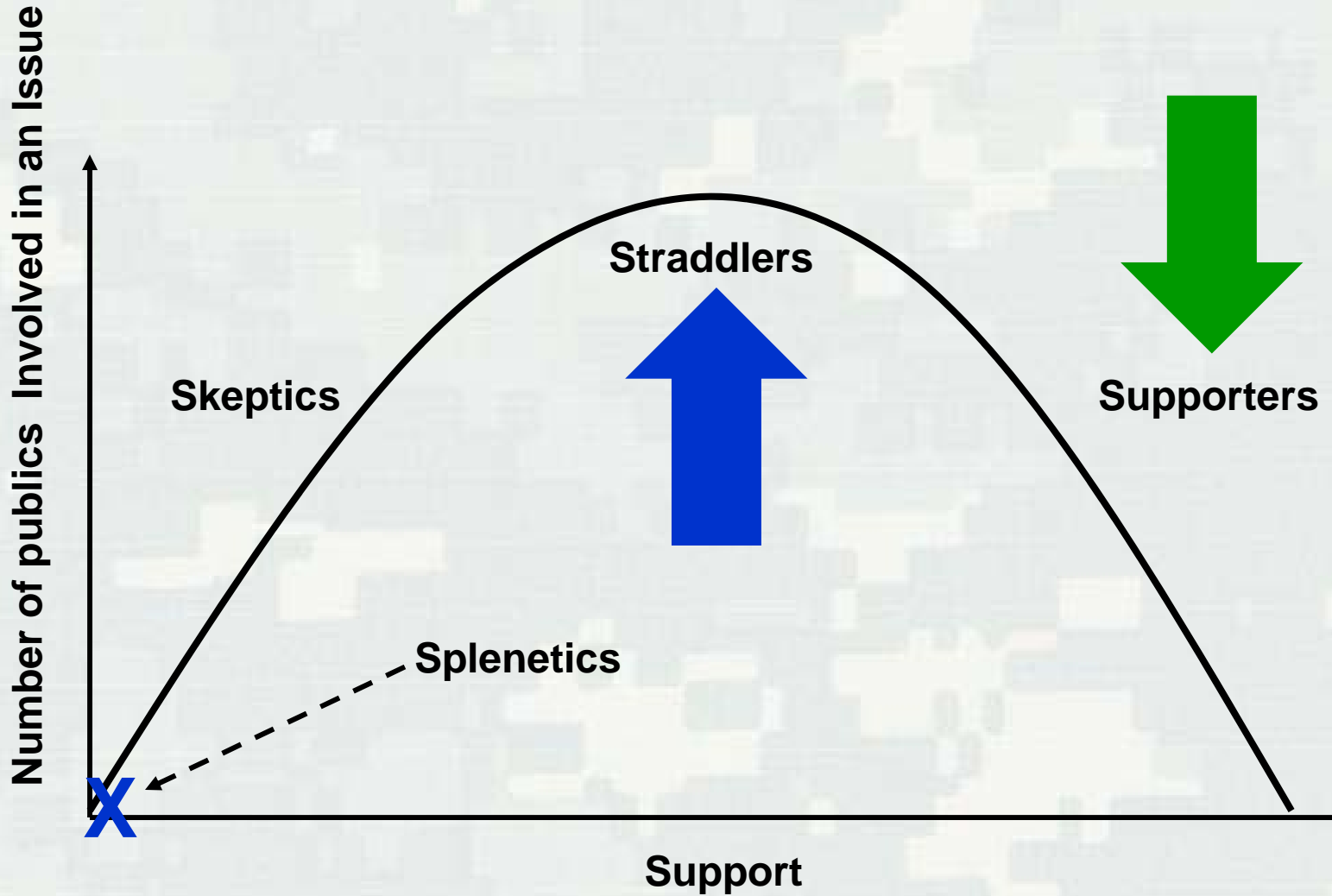
Splenetics Curve – Favorable Shift



Splenetics Curve – Unfavorable Shift



Splenetics Curve



Don't Underestimate the Importance of Non-Verbals

- Non-verbal communication can be
 - ▶ More important than words
 - ▶ More noticeable than words
 - ▶ More memorable than words
- Facts provide information
- Non-verbals facilitate interpretation



Definition(s) of Risk

- Risk = Probability x Consequences
- Risk = Publics' Perception = Publics' Reality
- Unfortunately these two definitions are not always compatible.



Definition(s) of Risk

- Risk = Probability x Consequences
- Risk = Publics' Perception = Publics' Reality
- For risk communication, **Risk = Hazard + Emotion**



Perception of Risk

Which is more dangerous?

Carbon Monoxide	or	Ozone
1200 ppm		5 ppm
Chlorine	or	DDT
10 ppm		34.5 ppm
Carbon tetrachloride	or	Vinegar
200 ppm		50 ppm
Agent Orange	or	Iodine
11.1 ppm		2 ppm
Vinegar	or	Acetic Acid
50 ppm		50 ppm



Know How and When to Use Risk Comparisons

- Avoid the trap of comparing voluntary risk to involuntary risk



Know How and When to Use Numbers

Numbers are not always comprehensible in size or relative terms, including:

- Quantities
- Concentration
- Probabilities



$[0.002 + e^{(2\pi)}] = 535.4936555$ and the limit of the sum of $(1/2^n)$ as n goes to infinity is $= 1$.

Therefore $\$535.4936555 + 1 = \536.49

So, this check is approximately made out for $\$536.49$

Have a nice day! ☺

Traps to Avoid

- Humor
- Negatives
- Hedges



Traps to Avoid

- Jargon, technobabble, gov speak

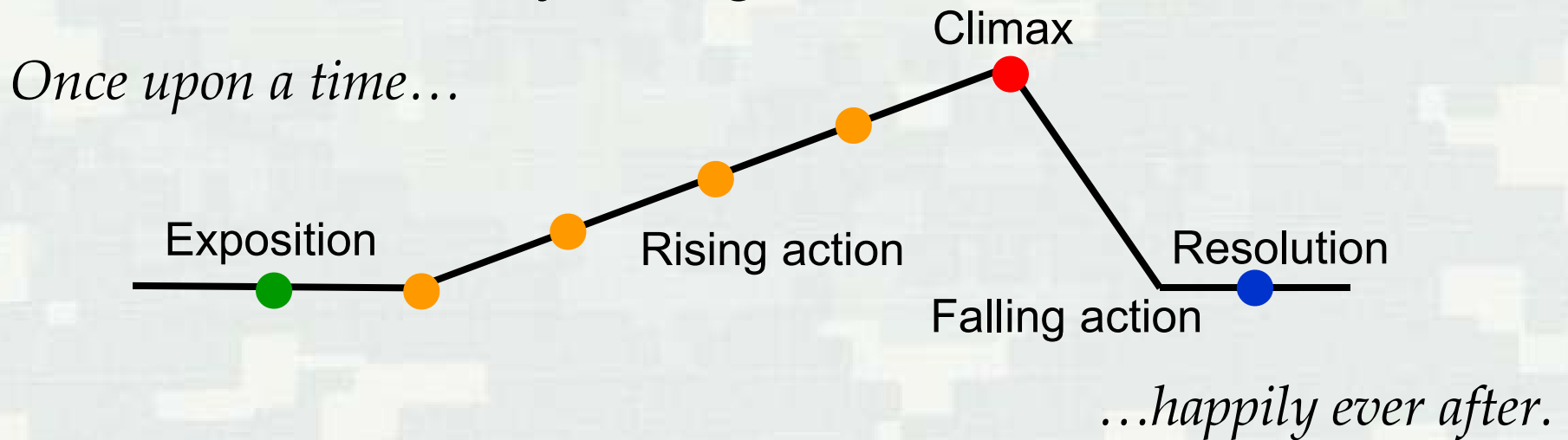
■ **Watch your language**
“The computer system is controlled by three primary main processing cores cross linked with a redundant melacortz ramistat and fourteen kiloquad interface modules. The core elements are based on FTL nanoprocessor units arranged into twenty five bilateral kelilactirals; with twenty of those units being slaved to the central heisenfram terminal on.. you do know what a bilateral kelilactiris, don't you?”
Dr. Peter Venkman, Ghostbusters

■ **Make every word count**



Traps to Avoid

- Facts before conclusions, i.e. normal story-telling



In risk communication,
conclusions may need
to precede facts



Traps to Avoid

- Forgetting to apply your non-verbal observation skills:
 - Are they listening to your factual discussion?
 - Do they seem confused? Tuned out? Irritated?
- Guarantees
- Fear of saying, “I don’t know.”
- Taking it personally:
 - Defensiveness
 - Verbal attacks
 - Feeling like a victim

I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know.

Mark Twain



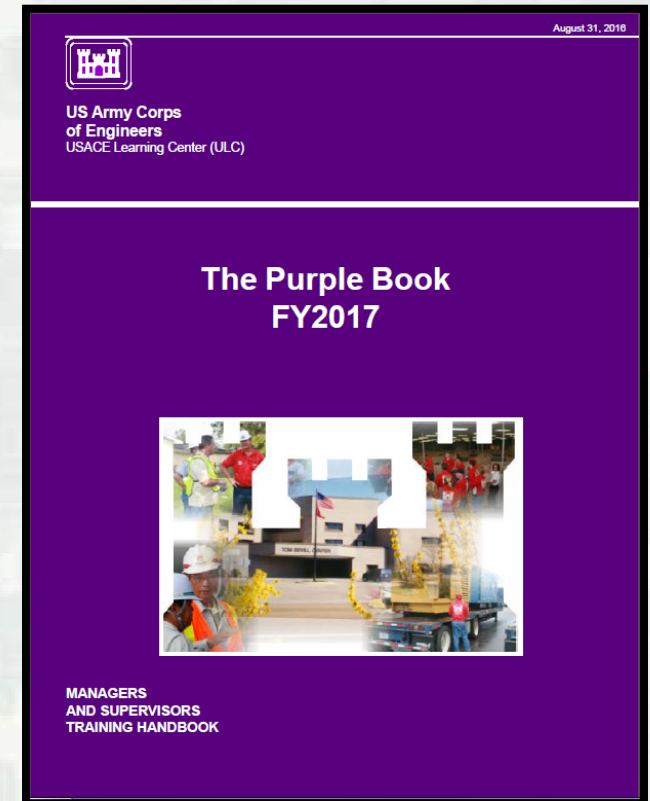
Writing More Gooder

- There is no substitute for proofreading
 - ▶ Let's eat Grandma!
 - ▶ Let's eat, Grandma!
 - ▶ “Rare white lion cub born in Ohama zoo”
www.cbsnews.com
 - ▶ With autocorrect, you may end up sending some thong you didn't Nintendo.



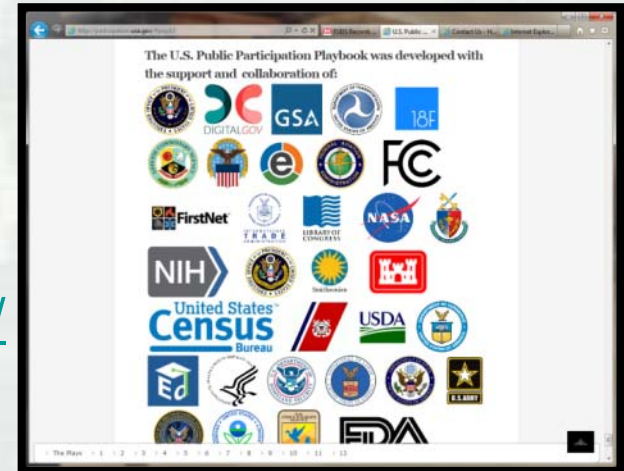
Resources

- Local Public Affairs Office
 - ▶ Don't wait until you have a problem before you engage PAO in your projects!
- Collaboration & Public Participation Community of Practice
 - <https://cops.usace.army.mil/sites/CP/Default.aspx>
- Risk communication training
 - ▶ PROSPECT Course 104 “Risk Communication and Public Participation”
 - ▶ FUDS Training Course 102 “Effective Communication for the FUDS Program”
 - ▶ Notre Dame of Maryland University – On-line graduate certificate in risk management
 - <http://www.ndm.edu/academics/graduate-studies/masters-programs/risk-management-certificate/>



More Resources

- Army Public Involvement Toolbox
 - ▶ <http://www.asaie.army.mil/Public/IE/Toolbox/>
- U.S. Public Participation Playbook
 - ▶ <http://participation.usa.gov/>
- International Association of Public Participation (IAP2)
 - ▶ www.iap2.org
- Risk Communication Guidelines for Public Officials
 - ▶ <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/Risk-Communication-Guidelines-for-Public-Officials/SMA02-3641>
- Improving Communication from the Government to the Public
 - ▶ www.plainlanguage.com



Who Ya Gonna Call?

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Questions?

