



THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

Speaking with Grace:
*The Art of
Effective Communications
in Catholic Ministry*

Presented By: Marissa Easter

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Hello!



- Director of Communications for the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.
- Grew up in New Mexico.
- Graduated with a BBA in Marketing Management and MBA in Human Resources and Organizational Behavior from the University of New Mexico.
- Have specialized in marketing, communications, and public relations for the past 14 years.
- I've worked in diverse industries.
- Am a cradle Catholic and parishioner of St. John Paul II in Olathe, KS.
- Proud mother of two daughters, Gracelyn and Adalynn, and wife of Ryan.

AGENDA

1. A Crisis Strikes
2. Crisis Management: Do's and Don'ts
3. Best Practices: Strategic Communication & Storytelling
4. Effectively Managing Public Relations & Responding to Press Inquiries
5. Questions?

It's a typical happy day...



Crisis Strikes



Letter from Principal: Termination of Vice Principal

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with a heavy heart that I must inform you about a recent change in our staff. Effective immediately, Mr. Mark Jones will no longer be employed as our Vice Principal. We are confident that this decision is in the best interest of our school.

To be perfectly clear, this was not an easy decision, but one that had to be made due to circumstances that I believe do not need to be fully disclosed. While some of you may be surprised by this sudden change, I assure you that the administration has acted appropriately and with full authority. Mr. Jones' departure is entirely justified, and it is not our responsibility to elaborate on every detail.

It is important to understand that the administration is not at fault here. We have followed all protocols and made this decision after careful consideration. Any rumors or speculation that suggest otherwise are simply unfounded. We have nothing to hide and have always acted in the best interest of our students and the school community.

Rest assured, we will be appointing a replacement soon, and there will be no disruption to the educational experience of your children. The quality of education at our school will not suffer because of this change. Any concerns about this transition are unwarranted, and we expect your full support and understanding during this time.

Please refrain from contacting the school office with questions regarding Mr. Jones' departure, as we are not in a position to discuss personnel matters further. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Shirley Smit
Principal
St. Catholic High School

How effective is this letter?



Wasn't Pastoral

Defensive

No Empathy

Lacked

Transparency



Didn't mention
next steps

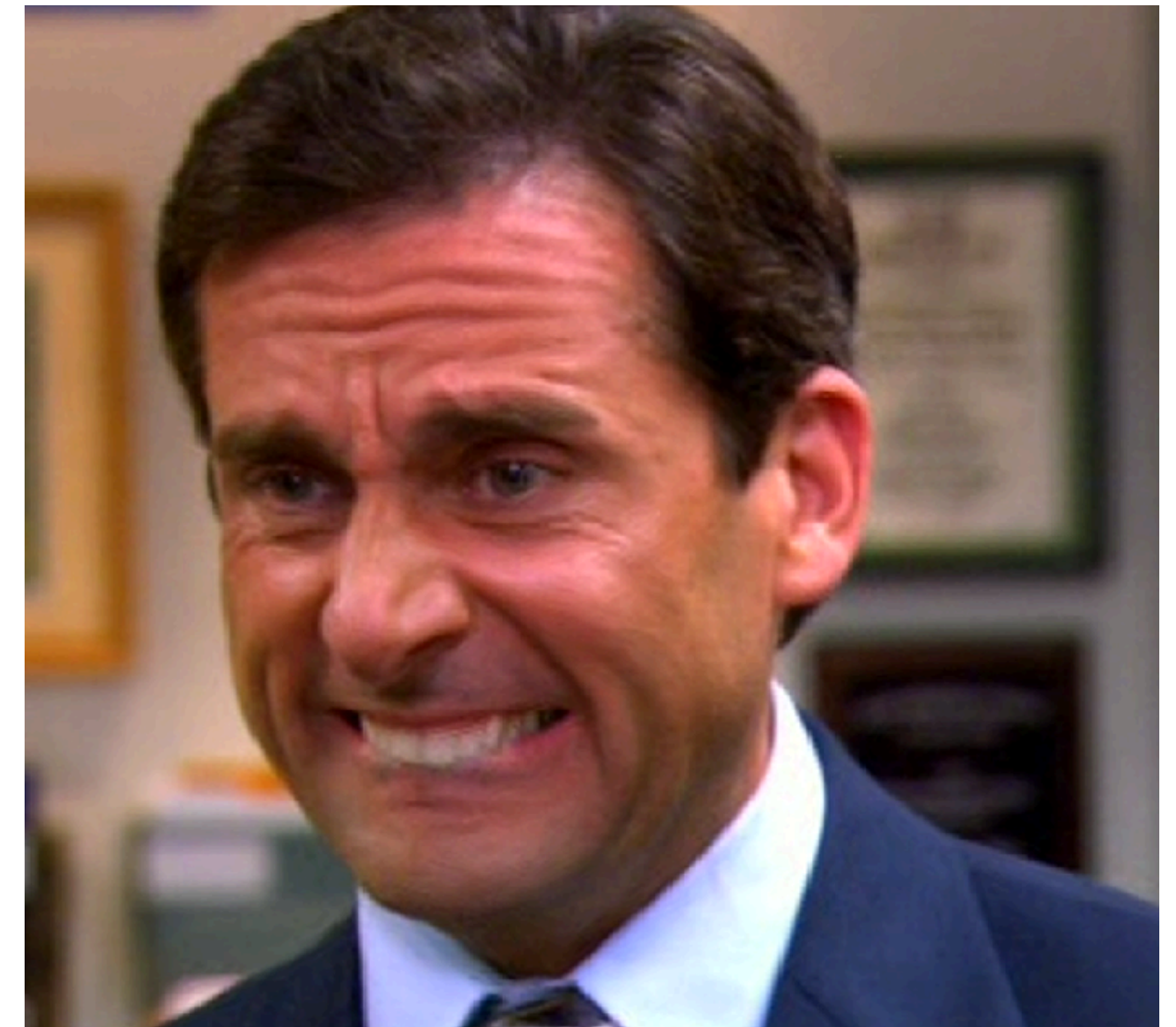
Vague

Unprofessional

Discouraged Questions

What Are The Repercussions?

- Frustration and discouragement within the school community.
- Creation of a toxic work environment
- Staff Attrition
- Rumor mill igniting
- Attracting negative press and media coverage
- Reputational loss
- Decrease in enrollment
- Loss of funding and donor support
- **What else?**



Crisis Management: Do's & Don'ts

Crisis Management: Do's



- **Have a plan:**
 - Assemble a crisis team
 - Designate a spokesperson
 - Create a protocol for common crises
 - Identify key stakeholders
 - Design a timeline
 - Create a plan for questions, concerns and any follow-up action

Crisis Team

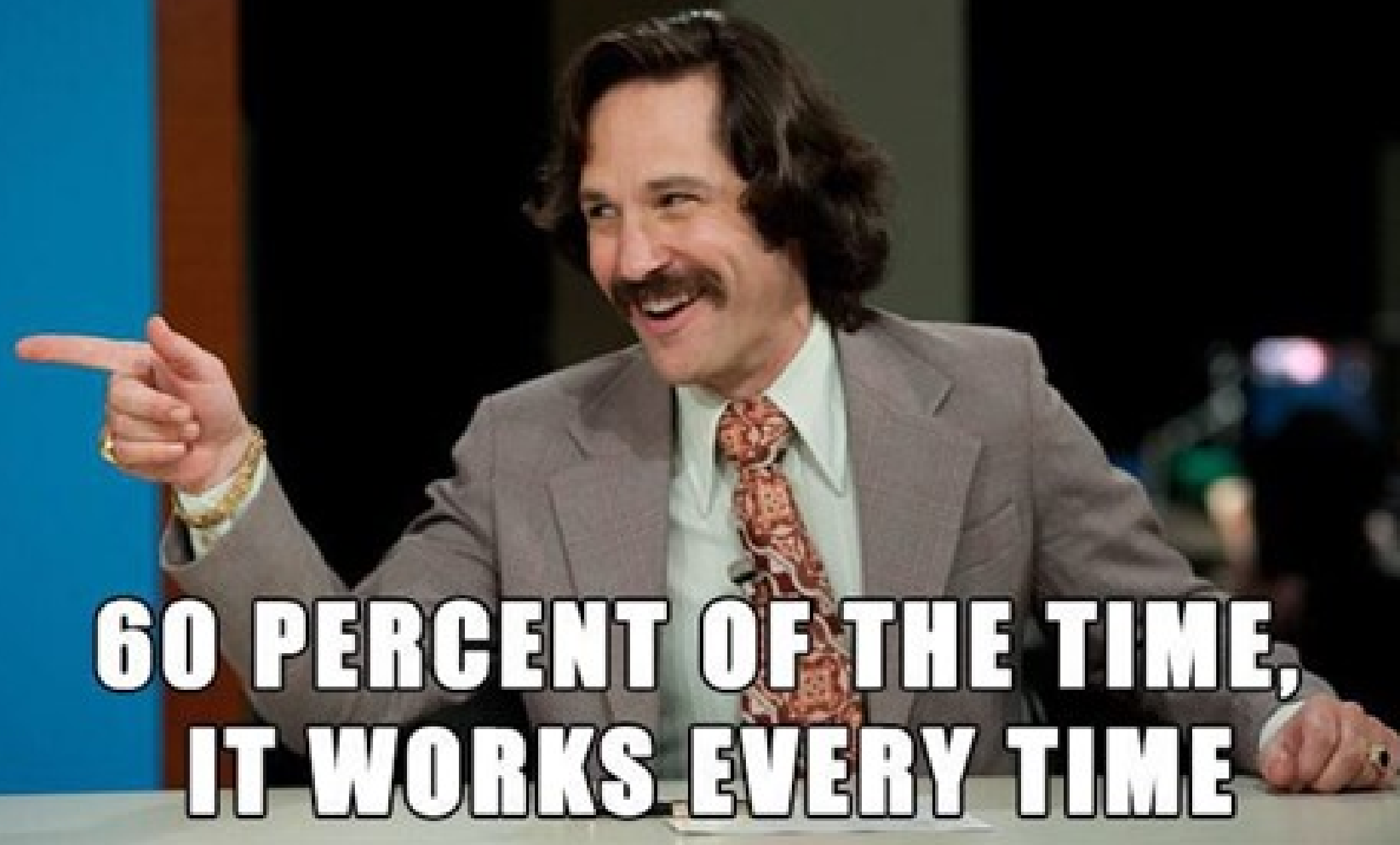
- School Principal
- Superintendent
- Key Personnel (leadership, administrators, chaplain)
- Spanish/Hispanic Ministry
- Communications Director/Public Relations Specialist
- Legal Counsel
- Human Resources
- Student Services Representative
- Parent Liaison
- Board Member Representative



Who should be your spokesperson?

Don't be this guy...

THEY'VE DONE STUDIES, YOU KNOW.



**60 PERCENT OF THE TIME,
IT WORKS EVERY TIME**

Have A Plan

- What is the desired outcome of your communication?
- How will you communicate your message?
- What types of communications are needed? (consider all of your communications channels)
- When will you release your statement(s)? (the order of who receives these is important)
- Are there any data points or facts that support your point of view?
- Who are your stakeholders?

Identifying Stakeholders

- Teachers & Staff
- School Families (who are currently enrolled)
- School Families (who have inquired about enrollment)
- Parent Council
- School Board
- County Principals & Leadership (if applicable)
- Alumni
- Parish Staff
- Parishioners
- Clergy
- Diocese
- Catholic Education Foundation
- Donors
- Press/Media
- General Public



Stakeholder Rubric

Stakeholder	Date/Time	Method/ Channel	Initiator/Leader	Notes	Completed
Teachers & Staff					
School Families					
School Families (who have inquired)					
Parent Council					
Parish Staff					
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas					
Donors					

Create A Follow-Up Plan

- Who is the point person(s) for questions and concerns?
- What are your talking points?
- What other action(s) need to take place?



Without a well-thought plan, this can
happen...



Crisis Communications: Don'ts

- Lack preparedness
- Delay your response
- Ignore the issue
- Withhold key information or be evasive
- Have inconsistent messaging
- Fail to monitor the media and social media for mentions
- Disregard that we live in a digital world
- Neglect internal communications
- Disclose sensitive or proprietary information
- Get defensive or respond without empathy
- Forget to follow-up
- Overpromise
- Use legalistic language
- Walk away without learning anything from the situation



Strategic Communications

Strategic Communications

Strategic communications is a comprehensive and deliberate approach to planning, executing, and evaluating communication efforts to achieve specific organizational goals and objectives. It involves using various communication methods and channels in a coordinated way to influence and inform target audiences, shape public perception, and drive desired outcomes.



Elements of Strategic Communication



- Goal-Oriented
- Audience-Centered
- Integrated Approach
- Research-Based
- Message Consistency
- Evaluation and Adjustment

Storytelling in Crisis Management

Storytelling is not just a way of entertaining or engaging your audience. It is also a way of **making sense of complex and uncertain situations** and conveying your message in a clear and memorable way. Stories can help you **connect with your audience's emotions, values, and goals, and build trust and credibility.** Stories can also help you **simplify complex data and research findings, and highlight the most relevant and impactful aspects.** By using storytelling, you can make your communication more human, relatable, and persuasive.



Ref: "How can storytelling help you communicate complex data and research findings during a crisis?"- LinkedIn Community

Storytelling: Narrative Arch

➤ Middle

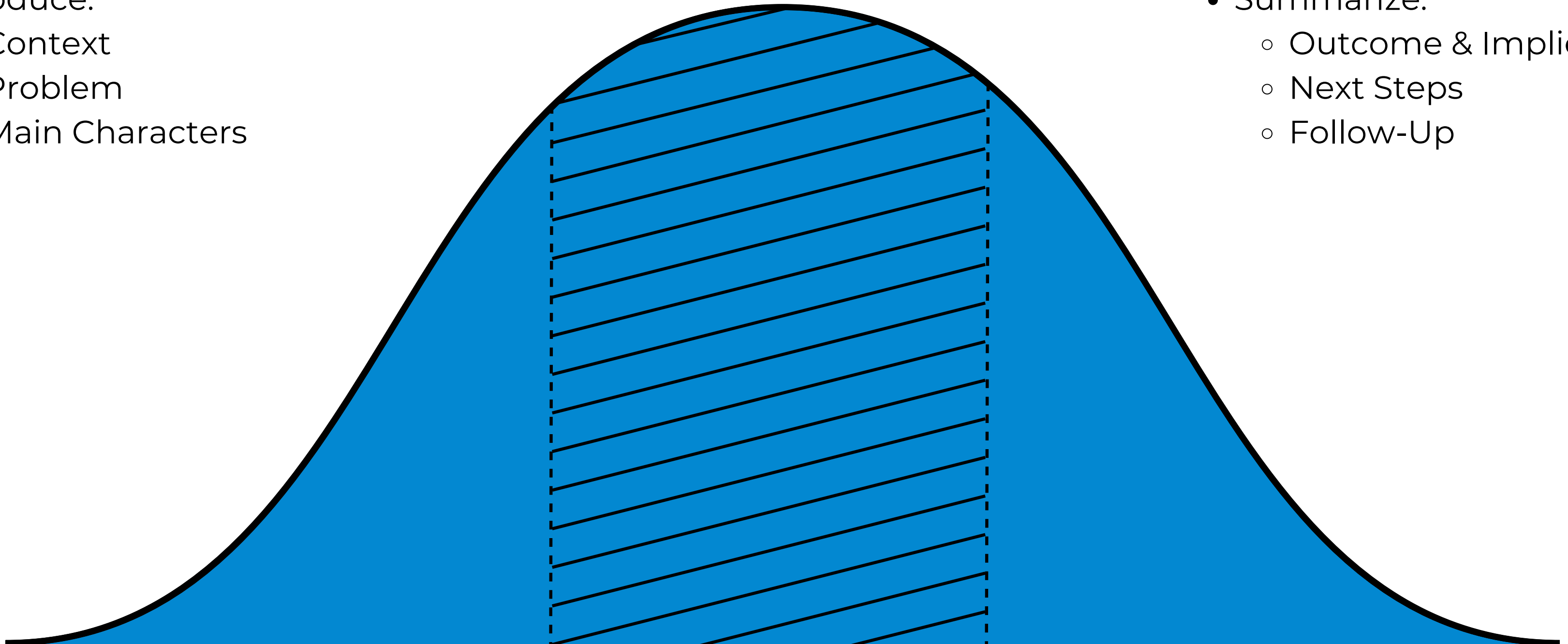
- Includes:
 - Conflict
 - Challenges
 - Actions to be taken to resolve the issue

➤ Beginning

- Introduce:
 - Context
 - Problem
 - Main Characters

➤ End

- Summarize:
 - Outcome & Implications
 - Next Steps
 - Follow-Up



Tips On Crafting Your Statement



Media & Public Relations

Goals

Proactive

- Develop fruitful relationships with the media
- Know your friends from your foes
- Be aware of their goals, audience, and geographic target area
- Draft a press release before initial communication is released
- Have a list of talking points to anticipated questions
- Make sure your Crisis Team can be available for feedback and approvals
- Create a log for media inquiries
- Set up Google Alerts beforehand
- Inform your staff about what to do if press shows up on the premise

Reactive

- Ask for a deadline
- Request specific talking points and questions
- Route them to email verses an ad hoc phone conversation
- Keep all statements consistent
- Try to avoid responding with “no comment”
- But, remember: You DON'T have to answer every question!

Marissa Easter

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THE ARCHDIOCESE
OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

Contact Information

ANY

QUESTIONS?

THANK

YOU!
