

Unconventional Paradigms for Successful Crisis Communications

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Successful Crisis Communications Requires Acceptance of Unconventional Paradigms

- People listen more intently but understand less
- Caring & empathy build trust and credibility not competence
- Message “strategies” are finite and driven by the type of crisis --- Defined by consequences & reaction
- Q&A is largely predictable and “seeing the question” is vital in handling the unpredictable

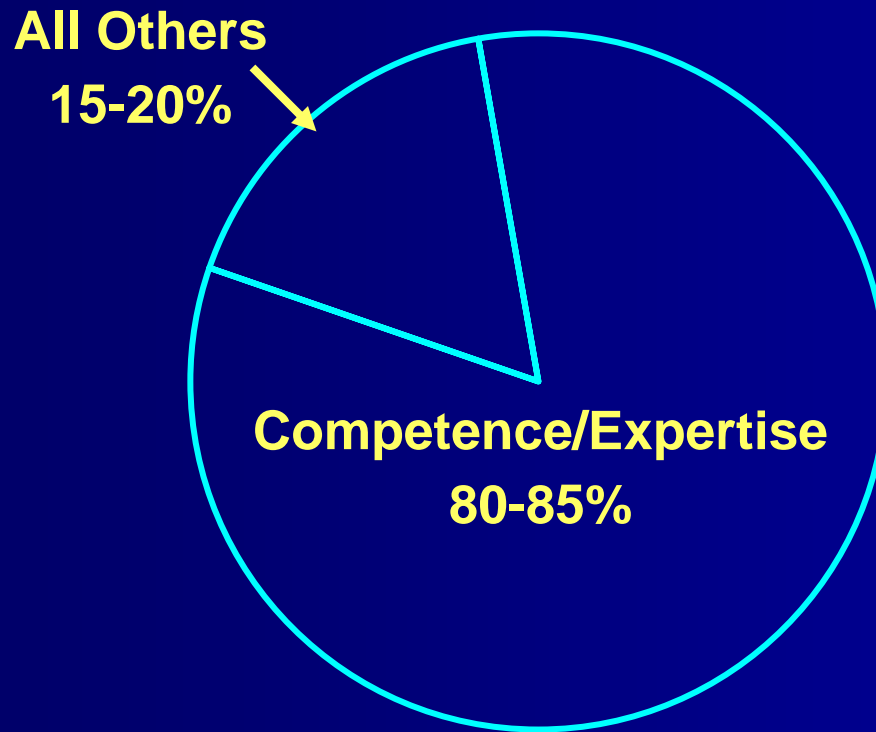
In a Crisis the Dynamics of Communicating Change --- Magnifying the Situation

- When stressed and upset the public listens more and hears less
 - **Want to know that you care before they care what you know**
 - **Have significant difficulty hearing, understanding and remembering**
 - **Process information at four grades below their education level**
- Speed of media reporting and questioning increases substantially (along with decreasing standards)--- no chance to catch up
- Visual images offer a decidedly different view of reality

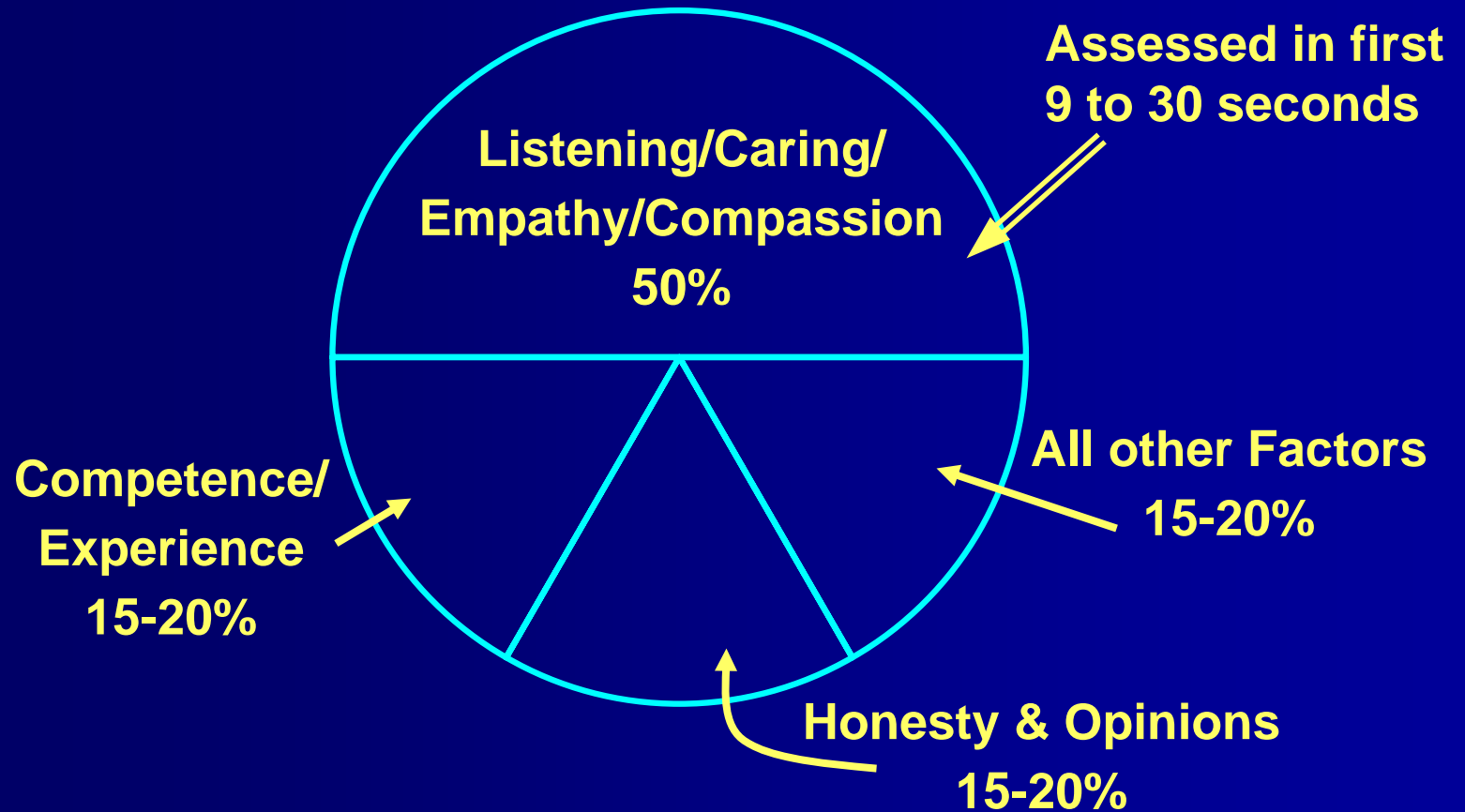
A Crisis is a Time of Uncertainty --- Need to Capitalize on What's Virtually Certain

- 95% of concerns/ questions can be generically predicted in advance
- 95% of initial reports are usually Inconsistent, Incomplete and Inaccurate
- 85% of a message delivered by non-verbal signals
- 50% of 'trust" is earned by compassion and caring

Competence & Expertise Drive Trust/ Credibility During “Normal” Communications



Caring & Empathy Drive Trust/Credibility During Periods of Crisis Communication



Message Strategies are Driven by Crisis Category --- Defined by Consequences & Reaction

Fatality, Compelling: Physical/Emotional Injury:
Physical/Environmental Damage. Criminal Charges

Category III –
Uncertain Outcome

Category IV –
Significant & Ongoing

Tolerated, understood
Disconcerting

Unacceptable
Disturbing

Shock, uncertainty
Threatening

Category I –
Known Outcome

Category II –
Uncertain Threat

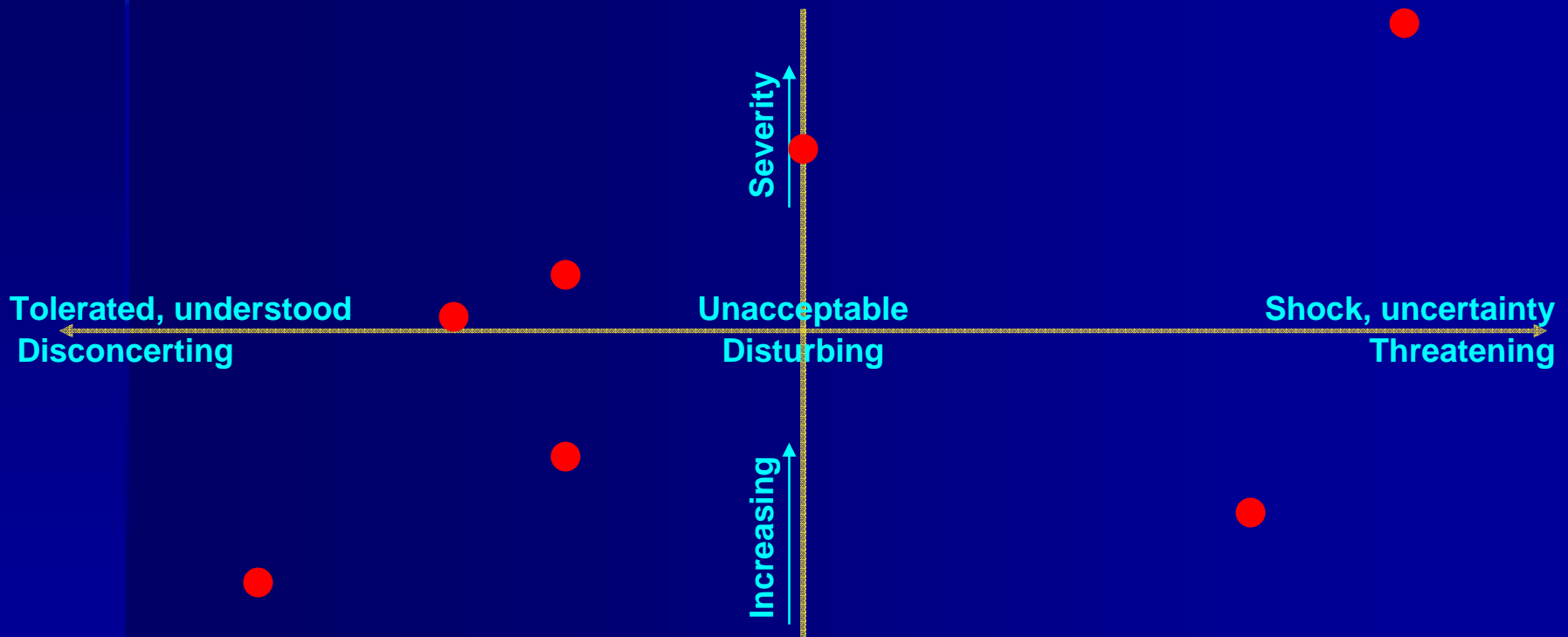
Behavioral/Procedural, Scandal,
Potential to be Significant, Civil Litigation

severity ↑

Increasing ↑

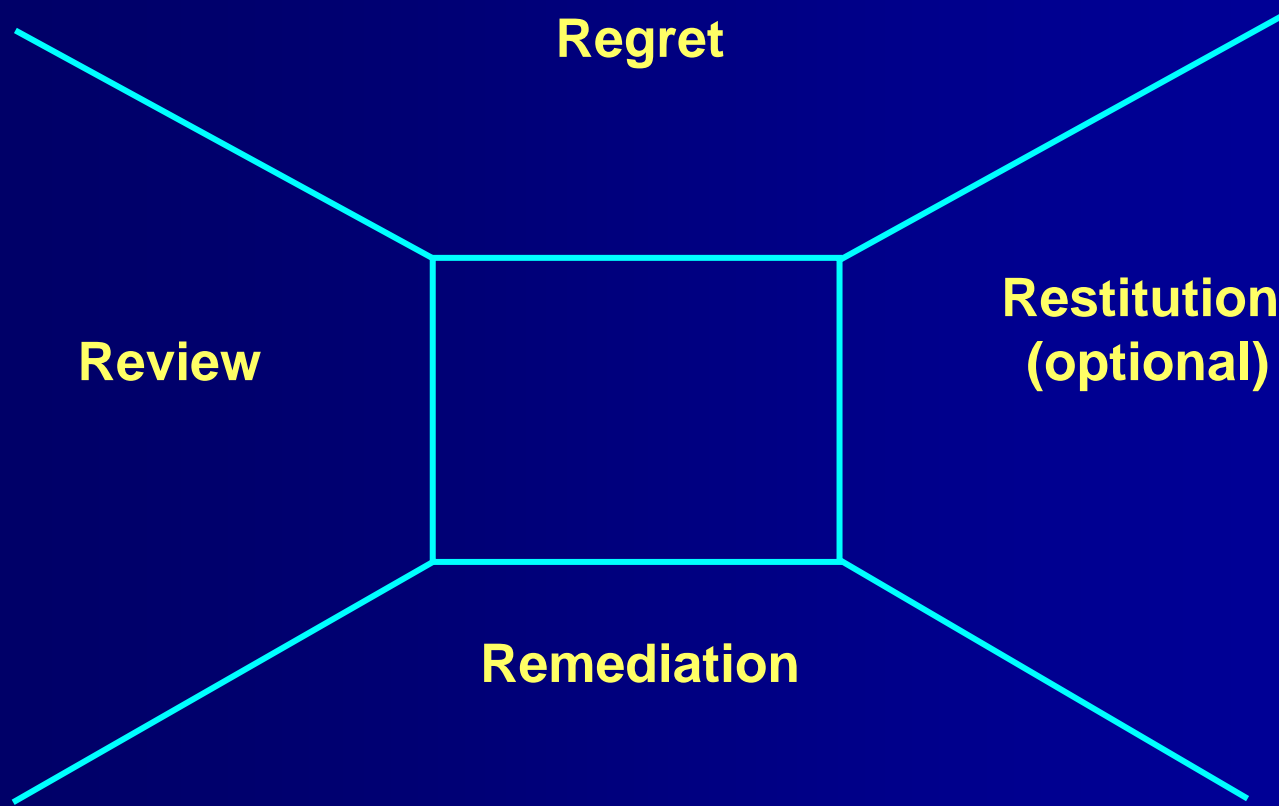
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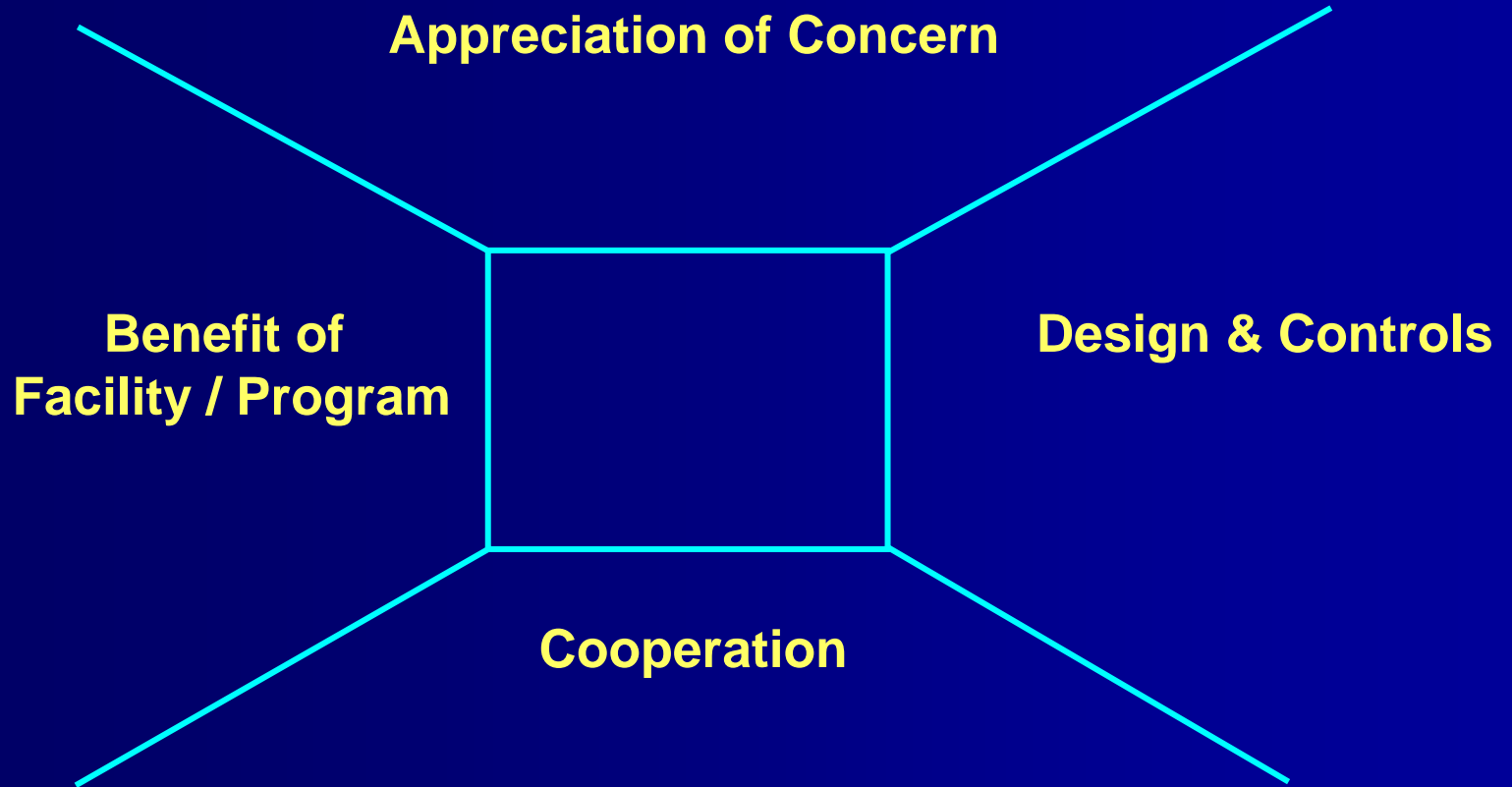


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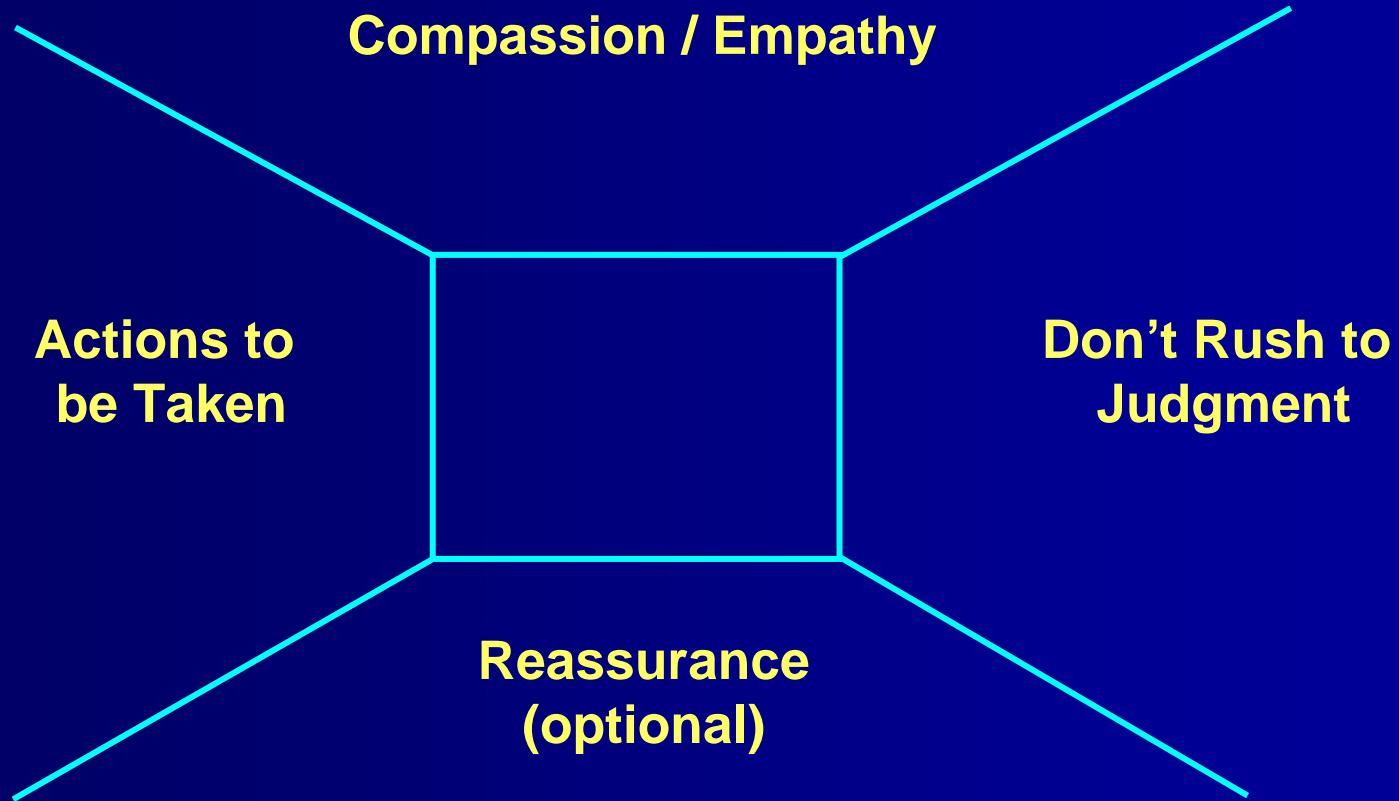
Type I Crisis Communications: The 4 R's Box



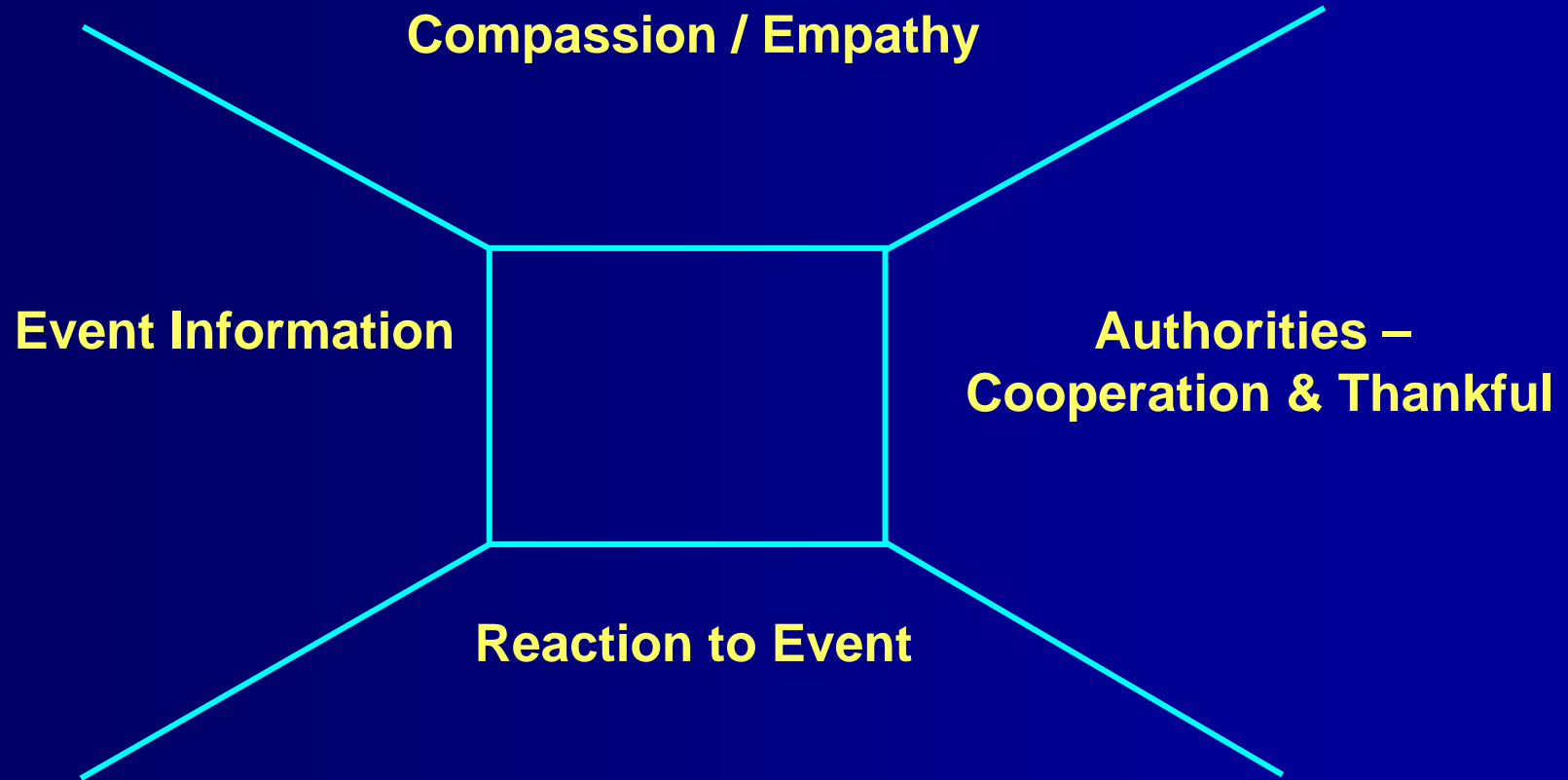
Type II Crisis Communications: The ABCD Box



Type III Crisis Communications: The CARD Box



Type IV Crisis Communications: The CARE Box



Barriers to Communication (especially Q&A) Expand During Times of Crisis

- **Defensive**
- **Complexity**
- **Quicksand**
- **Silver Bullet / Broken Record**
- **Fudging**
- **No Comment**
- **Vacuum**
- **Dismissive**

Seeing the Question: 5 Types

Direct (Factual)

Attack (Against Facts/
Interpretation of Events/Actions)

Emotional (Concerning/Implying
Injuries, Fatalities, Families, etc.)

Quicksand (Attacking Off Topic,
Speculating, Guaranties)

Irrational / Irrelevant (Off
topic pontification)

Stay \Longrightarrow

Jab & Go \Longrightarrow

Slug & Go
Jab & Go \Longrightarrow

Touch & Go \Rightarrow

Pick & Go \Longrightarrow

The Unconventional Paradigms of Crisis Communication

- People process less information --- the first heard tends to dominate
- There are 4 categories of crisis that determine the use of a message box based on: The 4 Rs, CARD, CARE and ABCD
- Questions are predictable and the unpredictable can be seen --- preparation is vital
- Caring & Empathy Build/Maintain Trust and Credibility --- its not always an automatic emotion