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# The Predicate Story - a Base Line Story for all Subsequent Media Coverage.

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In time of crisis it is important for companies to establish a proactive media strategy that includes working with a reporter to get a "predicate story" written. The predicate story tells the whole story—good, bad and ugly—in one place, and serves as a base line story for all subsequent media coverage.

Why is this a good idea? First and foremost, with many issues, and especially in a crisis or litigation, you want to get out ahead of a story. You want to get the facts in the press so that someone else does not get to the public first with distorted facts. The predicate story is the most effective way to do this for several reasons.

Specifically, in a crisis, you want to get the story in and out of the media cycle as quickly and accurately as possible. A predicate story can help do this by being the definitive story on the issue. But, it can only be effective if the story covers all the facts—both good and bad.

A predicate story also allows the subject an opportunity to get messages and on-the-record comments into the story. This will ensure that the coverage of the issue is balanced with your facts.

You may also be able to negotiate an embargo with a reporter writing a predicate story. In this agreement, a reporter will agree to not publish the story until a certain date. For example, if you are about to file a complaint against a defendant, you may negotiate an exclusive story to a reporter who agrees to wait to publish the story until the date the complaint is filed. This will give the facts in the complaint maximum effect in the court of public opinion, and generally bring attention to your case.

Start by finding the right reporter to write the story. It is always good to work with a reporter that you know and trust, but any reporter who has been balanced and thoughtful in the past is a good one to approach. Be sure to provide the reporter the resources he/she needs to do his/her job, such as access to key documents and people knowledgeable about the facts. Finally, remember that a predicate story will take some time to write; therefore, you want to start early to give the reporter an opportunity to investigate the facts and to get comments from others. If a predicate story is to do its job, it will take time.

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