Information overload: Filtering through it all and deciding what is important?

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Failure to Communicate Effectively

The Information Vacuum

Individual fears magnified

Media ‘scare’ stories

Speculation++

Lobby groups own agenda
Communication is a two way process
Trust and Confidence

Have to be earned and cannot be mandated

Trust and confidence have to be built in "peace time" in advance of crisis situations
Social media analysis - what’s being said about food risks and benefits on different social media platforms?

Content analysis of Twitter, blogs, & forums during Dioxin crises

Online comments on the risks of red meat

TWEETVIS: an text mining and data visualisation tool

E coli 104

Social media analytics and intelligence?
Often the things that worry people are not the things to damage their health!
To achieve Behaviour Change?
Increase Awareness
Raise level of knowledge
Change Attitudes
Change Behaviour

“Attitude-Intention- Behaviour” Gap

Necessary But Not Sufficient

• Fiscal measures
• Regulations*
• Enforcement*
• Incentives
• Technology
• Society Norms
• Family Norms
• Peer Pressure

Enabling Society

Evaluation

Evaluation

Evaluation
Change in Dissemination

- Discussed
- Validated
- Concise
- Controlled
- Scientific Language

...and then came TWITTER!
Message comprehensible for lay audiences?
Communicating complex scientific

Professor, don’t worry about the detail, we are on air in 2 minutes

- Body burden
- Bio accumulation
- Toxic Equivalents
- Dose Response
- TDI
- Picograms
- LOAEL
Risk or Crisis Communication

Crisis
Leave exclusion zone immediately

Risk
Don’t light fires in a forest
Openess and Transparency

Exposes weaknesses in the regulatory controls if they exist

Risk Assessment

Risk Management
Risk Communication not in isolation

What does this mean for my family and me?

Risk Assessment

What are YOU doing to control the risk?

Risk Management
Public Reaction

Strong emotions, such as fear, anxiety, distrust, anger, outrage, helplessness and frustration may emerge and present serious barriers to subsequent effective communication.
Pseudo Scientific experts can amplify crisis

I don’t think this crisis is being handled properly, many people could become ill or even die!!!
Consistent Risk Communication Messages?

Convergent validity?

Message

USDA

FDA

Municipalities

Police

Academics

Customs

Regions
The Power of Social Networking

Truth Or Lies – Millions Will know in Seconds...

Just Press SEND...
Information is a good thing??

“You cannot have too much information”

“The more information the better”

“Information is power!”

Epidemic of social media platforms – no effective filters
SEO = Search engine optimisation

Communication Channels

- Website
  - News and events
  - Blog
  - Mobile website
  - Media gallery

- Social Media
  - Twitter
  - YouTube
  - Flickr
  - LinkedIn
  - Facebook
  - Xing

- Google +

- Conventional Media
  - Presentations
  - Networking
  - Events
  - Stand
  - Radio
  - TV
  - Local press
  - Newspapers
  - Newsletters
  - Trade magazines
Risk Communication Practitioner

Focus on the message and the channel to the consumer

Food scientists
Doctor
Government officials
Risk Communication Practitioner

Research:-
How people perceive risks?
How people seek and process information?
How people react to messages?
How they behave in a crisis?

Psychologists
Social Scientists
Economists
Anthropologists
Communication experts
Media amplifying risks

- Super-bugs in ground beef
- Infant formula contamination doubles: 10->20 ppb
- Deadly Acrylamide
Conventional media feeding off social media and vice versa.
Fill that space with SOMETHING!!!
Information Pollution

Contamination" of useful information with information that might not be entirely accurate

Cognitive overload– people make wrong decisions

Information fatigue- interferes with creative problem solving
Citizen journalists

Shit:-
not optimised
for mobile
devices!
I finally figured out how to manage my incoming data, so that I'm not overwhelmed by information overload.

Cool! Are you using decision support software, or some kind of coherent organizational environment?

Nope. There's a little "off" button here.
Monitor the Media

Often the media may have the story before you are aware of it!
Searching Blogosphere

- Link Sharing
- Evangelists
- Fresh Content
- Track Backs
- Open Discussions
- Peer Trust
- User Comments
- BlogRolls
- RSS Feeds
- Thought Leaders
- Brand Awareness
4 examples

E Coli 104  “Pink slime”  Horse meat  GMOs
May to June 2011 E coli O104 outbreak in Germany
4075 cases (908 Kidney failure), 50 deaths

Source of outbreak
Bean Sprouts from Egypt
2011 Spanish Cucumbers Harvest dumped because named in correctly as the source of outbreak
Reaction to adverse publicity
Russia bans all salads from EU
Patient admitted to Dublin Hospital with Enteritis

June 13th 2011

A relative tweets.
...into Cyberspace It Goes!

I heard the doctor say he thinks Dad was Poisoned in Germany...
Conventional media takes stories from “Blogsphere”

Ireland's First Victim of Death

Doctors have confirmed that a patient admitted to the City Hospital is the first Irish victim of the deadly German E coli strain that is wreaking havoc in that country. This person has recently returned from Germany and is believed to have eaten imported cucumbers whilst there. They are currently in a critical condition causing alarm for health care staff.
Big Lessons from E coli 104

No co-ordinated communications

16 Regions- all had several spoke persons

Inconsistent information

Spanish cucumbers wrongly named by a politician

Laboratory results too slow
If a picture tells a thousand words what can a youtube video clip do?
Key lessons from Lean finely textured beef story

Authorities too late into the ring

Authorities failed to embrace new communication modalities
2013 Horse meat scandal

Major food fraud across EU
Beef replaced by horse meat
Nobody became ill
Looking for Microscopic Contamination…

…while Truck Loads of horse meat moving around EU!
Weaknesses in Food Safety Enforcement exposed

Routine food safety inspections and tests can miss fraud

Not routine to DNA speciate meat

Food safety inspectors

Police are required to deal with fraud
EFSA under attack

GMO Risk Assessment Panel

Too slow with approvals for biotech companies
Too fast for some NGOs
This Pasta is made from irradiated mutant wheat.
Ethical and Moral Issues

So you want to Modify what I have Created?
Big lesson from GMO debacle

Failure to anticipate and address consumer concerns from the outset

Patronizing scientists

Is genetic engineering a good thing or a bad thing?
Lessons from 4 examples

1. Do not mislead the public
2. Do not stay silent
3. Have consistent messages
4. Involve the police if there is food fraud
Big Lesson from 4 examples

• Understanding who people are listening to and their strategies - Celebrity endorsement

• Authorities need to get into the ring early before false messages get traction

• Use the new communication channels or loose your audience
Social media frames risk perception and consumer preferences
Animal Welfare

Being Vegan Is Red Hot

Rosanna Davison for PETA

For a free vegan starter kit, visit PETA.org.uk.

Turn over a new leaf: GO VEGETARIAN

PETA
Healthier for you, the animals and the environment?
EFSA:- Communication Guidelines

http://www.efsa.europa.eu/

WHEN FOOD IS COOKING UP A STORM

A joint initiative of the European Food Safety Authority and national food safety organisations in Europe
Different Audiences

Different audiences may require different messages, using different vocabulary, on the same subject. emphasising the importance of customised the message for the target audience.
Printed Publications

➢ Good for reaching specific target audiences

➢ Single topic focus

➢ One-shot mailing or timed output

➢ Ideal as a reference tool

➢ Conference handout

➢ Only for stable/slow change information
Digital Publications

- Inexpensive to produce
- Easy to update/change
- Fast distribution
- Email directly to audience
- “First” with information
- Available on multiple devices
Social Media – valuable channel

- Totally uncontrolled – truth or lies!
- Around the world in seconds
- Can be used to great effect;
  - Rapidly informing and engaging with interested parties
    - Simple, narrow messages that need to reach a broad range of consumers
    - Catalyst for behavioural change
    - Outreaches to new audiences
Blogging is not just for kids?

- Informing & Engaging
- Sharing Opinions
- Situational Overviews
- Direct Messaging
Good for sending fast, topic-related alerts (maximum 140 characters) to interested subscribers. Driving subscribers to online content where there is more information and greater context. Enabling dissemination of the original message as accurately as possible, given the ease of forwarding function.
Building trust: explaining science, communications and policies

Control the content

Understanding Science videos:
Engaging with the public

New tools

Internet panels

www.foodrisc.org
Real time data collection and analysis

Web survey response

- Assess consumer reaction
- Test messages
- Test policies
- Monitor consumer perceptions
- Public barometer
- Enables real-time adaptations of actions
The goalposts are moving

But the pitch is moving as well!!