

# Media Crisis Communications

- ✓ Meet and develop partnerships
- ✓ Clear and Concise
- ✓ Stay in your lane
- ✓ Only speak facts
- ✓ No science jargon or acronyms
- ✓ Prepare two key points to communicate
- ✓ Show empathy
- ✓ PRACTICE!



# Information Gathering

87% of your audience will determine your credibility by body language alone!

## The 5 Senses

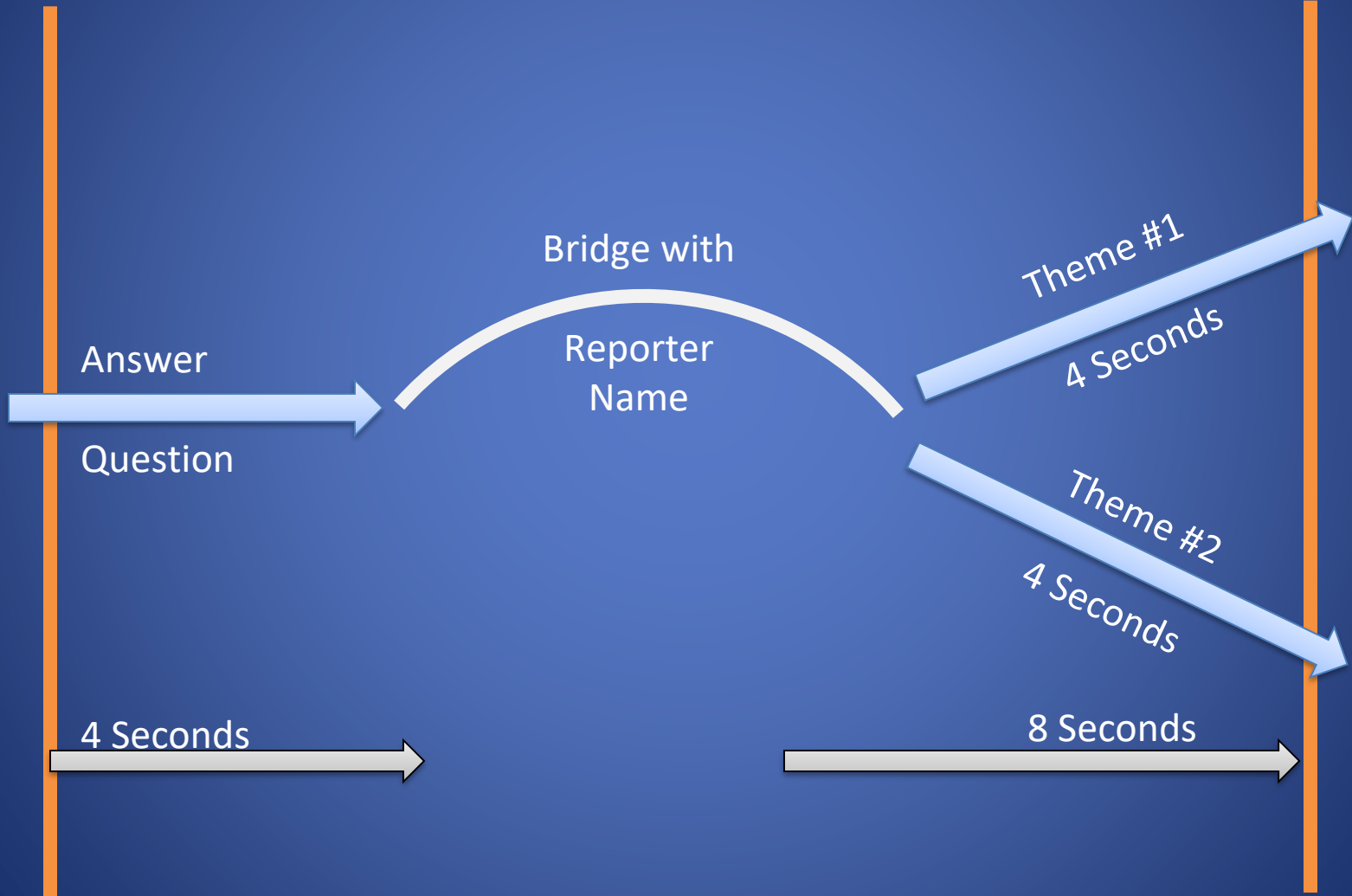


Percentage	Sense
1%	Taste
1.5%	Touch
3.5%	Smell
7%	Hearing
87%	Seeing

# Richard Brundage Technique



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Total Sound Bite Running Time = 12 seconds

### ***Sample Scenario:***

You are working at a WFO during an outbreak of thunderstorms, some of which become severe. A local reporter, John Smith, calls reporting injuries from flying debris at the YMCA's weekly outdoor children's softball game.

The 12 second sound bite format: **Answer...** **[Bridging Phrase]...** **Theme 1 + Theme 2**

**"It's truly unfortunate that people were injured, but may I point out John, our mission is to protect life and property and the National Weather Service promotes weather safety awareness campaigns year round to raise awareness of these types of weather hazards."**



## Successful Bridging Phrases

The following excerpt explains why it is important to use the reporter's name. Dick Brundage taught us that it's for two reasons... they'll probably use that clip because they like the recognition of hearing their name...and because it's harder to edit the clip and chances are that your theme after the bridge will be aired.

**"As I said before, [Reporter's name]..."**

**"[Reporter's name], what's really important here..."**

**"But [Reporter's name], we don't want to overlook the fact that..."**

**"[Reporter's name], Let me point out again..."**

**"And [Reporter's name], remember..."**

**"And [Reporter's name], looking at the big picture we can see..."**

**"[Reporter's name], I can't emphasize enough..."**

**"And [Reporter's name], when you put it all together..."**

**"What makes sense to us, [Reporter's name], is..."**

**"[Reporter's name], I think we'd be more complete if we said..."**

**I'd be more correct, [Reporter's name], if I added..."**

**"But [Reporter's name], when you look at the whole story..."**

**"That's certainly part of the issue, [Reporter's name], but rounding it out is..."**

**"And again, [Reporter's name], here are 2 key points..."**

**"Once again, [Reporter's name], you can complete the picture by saying..."**

## Ten things to say...before you know what to say

- Express care, concern, regret, sympathy, or **empathy** for those affected.
- **"Preliminary"** is your best friend.
- Facts: **Who, what, when, where, why, how...**
- Protecting lives and property is our top concern.
- How quickly NWS responded and what was done.
- Who to contact.
- Situation is **stable...stabilized...stabilizing**.
- Advice to the public; as well as our willingness to work with the public.
- We will cooperate fully with all the appropriate federal/state/local authorities to find out what happened, why it happened, and what we can do about it in the future.
- The environmental effects and impact.

# Media Survival Tips

- Suggest talking points before the interview: **help set the agenda**, help the reporter to help you tell the story.
- Answer questions - stay alert - listen: **listen to your interviewer**, don't start formulating the answer to a question that is not being asked. And listen with your face; be compassionate and viewed as someone who is likeable.
- **Admit Mistakes.**
- Lean forward slightly - positive body language: Don't lean back, don't swivel and fidget. Don't cross your arms.
- Stick to the subject - don't ramble: Don't open other situations unnecessarily. Answer questions with enough information to get your side of the story told. Don't be a slave to questions.
- Never go "off-the-record." (Assume EVERYTHING is on the record)
- Avoid arguments and hostility.





## Missed Warning

### Radar Outage

It's a busy holiday weekend. Scattered thunderstorms develop during the evening and become more intense than earlier anticipated. The radar takes a direct lightning strike.

Unfortunately, surrounding radars are too far away to effectively interrogate and warn on the storms, which produced numerous injuries at several outdoor venues.

#### Answer:

Our radar took a direct lightning hit. Technicians are working to restore service.

**Bridging Phrase:** *"And [Reporter's name], you can complete the picture by saying..."*

#### Themes (Pick 2):

1. Our mission is to protect lives and property.
2. NWS SKYWARN spotters are our "eyes and ears," providing us with valuable ground truth information that may not be immediately detectable by radar.
3. Outreach efforts are conducted to educate the public on severe weather preparedness. This is the ultimate goal of becoming a Weather Ready Nation.
4. NWS employees are reliable and highly dedicated, providing valuable services and weather information to the public 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
5. Just as your electronic equipment at home can be vulnerable to lightning strikes, so is our radar network.

**Fact Sheets:** [StormReady Program](#), [Lightning](#), and [SKYWARN Program](#)

# Missed Warning

## *Deaths or Other Adverse Impacts to High Profile Figures*

The primary radar operator is following numerous severe and tornadic storms. Unfortunately, one of the storms that only had a Severe Thunderstorm Warning ends up producing a tornado. Damage is extensive, and there are a number of fatalities, including a high-profile political figure.

Media outlets want to know why a tornado warning was not issued for this storm.

### **Answer:**

Although a tornado warning was not issued for this storm, we did have a severe thunderstorm warning in effect, stating that a tornado is possible along with strong winds and/or large hail.

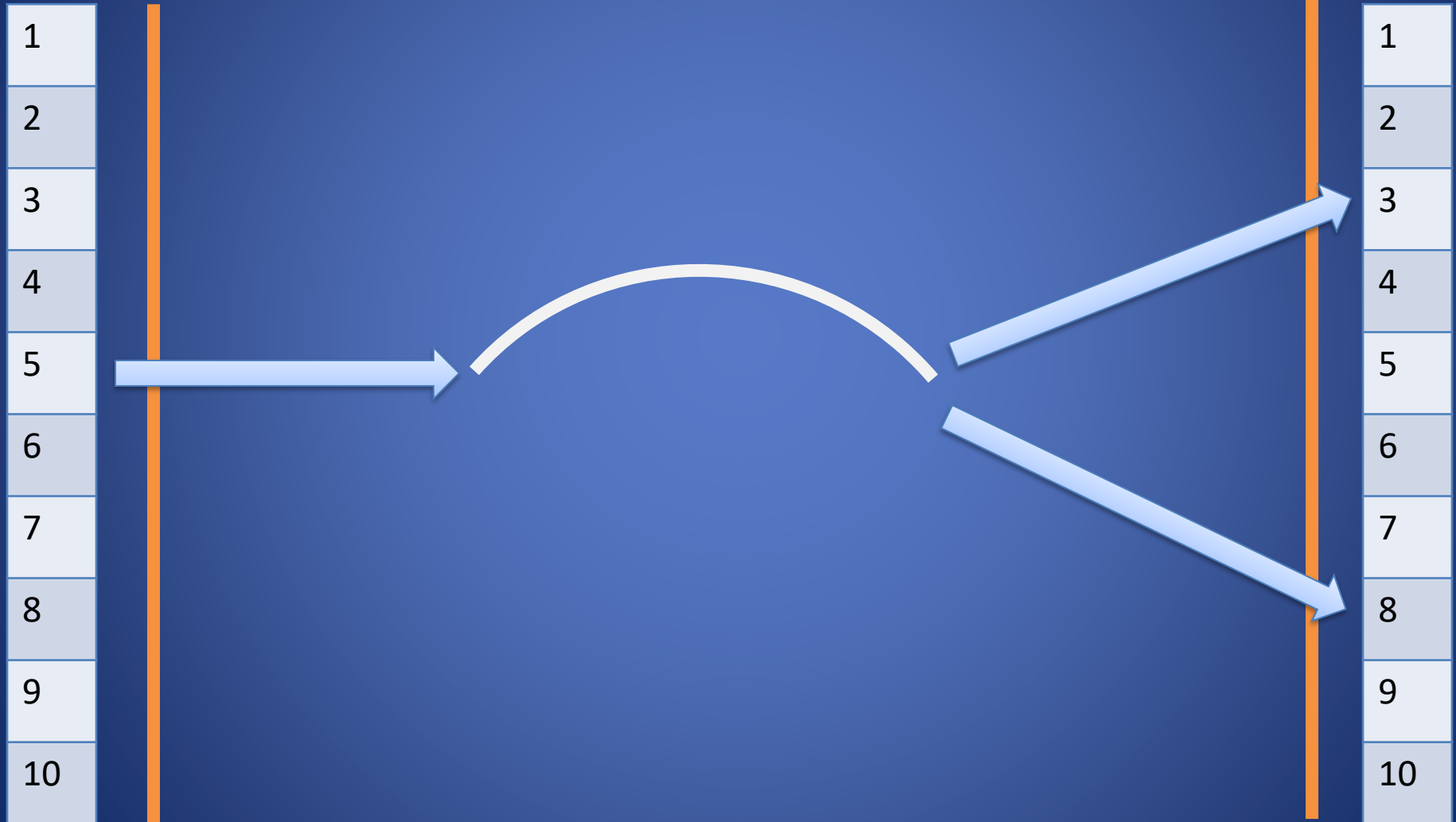
**Bridging Phrase:** *"[Reporters Name], it is important to remember that..."*

### **Themes (Pick 2):**

1. Severe thunderstorms can and sometimes do produce tornadoes with little or no warning. The latest science allows for even the best tornado warning lead times to be measured in minutes.
2. The NWS radar network does have practical limitation which is why SKYWARN spotters are an integral part of the warning process.
3. This event will be included in future research which will hopefully prevent further loss of life.
4. Our mission is to protect lives and property.



# Thinking Exercise Time



# Reference

Brundage, R., 2006. *The Heart in Communicating – one person's journey from broadcaster to crisis communicator*. Richard Brundage, 200 pp.