

“Understand the Media, but Deliver Your Message”

*Sylvia Rowe/Nick Alexander
SR Strategy, LLC
International Life Sciences Institute
Annual Meeting
Media Training Session
January 20, 2012*

Goals and objectives

- **To understand and meet the communication challenges between food scientists and the broader public, including journalists**
- **To become knowledgeable about addressing media interest in current research and/or controversial evolving science**
- **To become acquainted with methods for delivering effective messages to editors, reporters, and producers at both traditional and new media**

Engage the journalists

“Journalists are more compelled to understand scientists than scientists are journalists.”

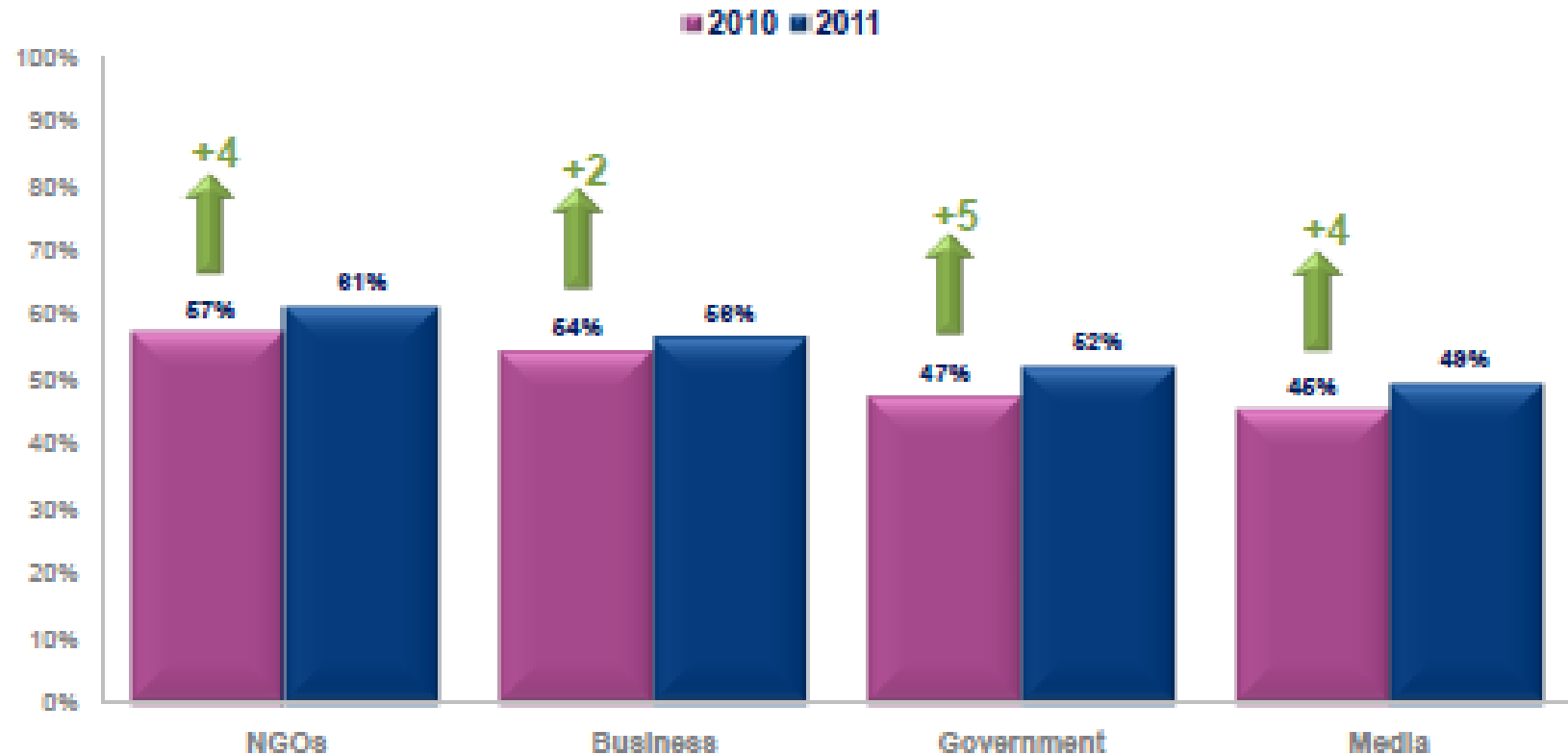
American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS)

***Science and Research
Drive Media and Policy***

“The media, new and old, abhor a vacuum. When an issue moves into public consciousness, you must set an articulate, rational and proactive agenda – or the media will do it for you.”

Globally, trust increases in all institutions

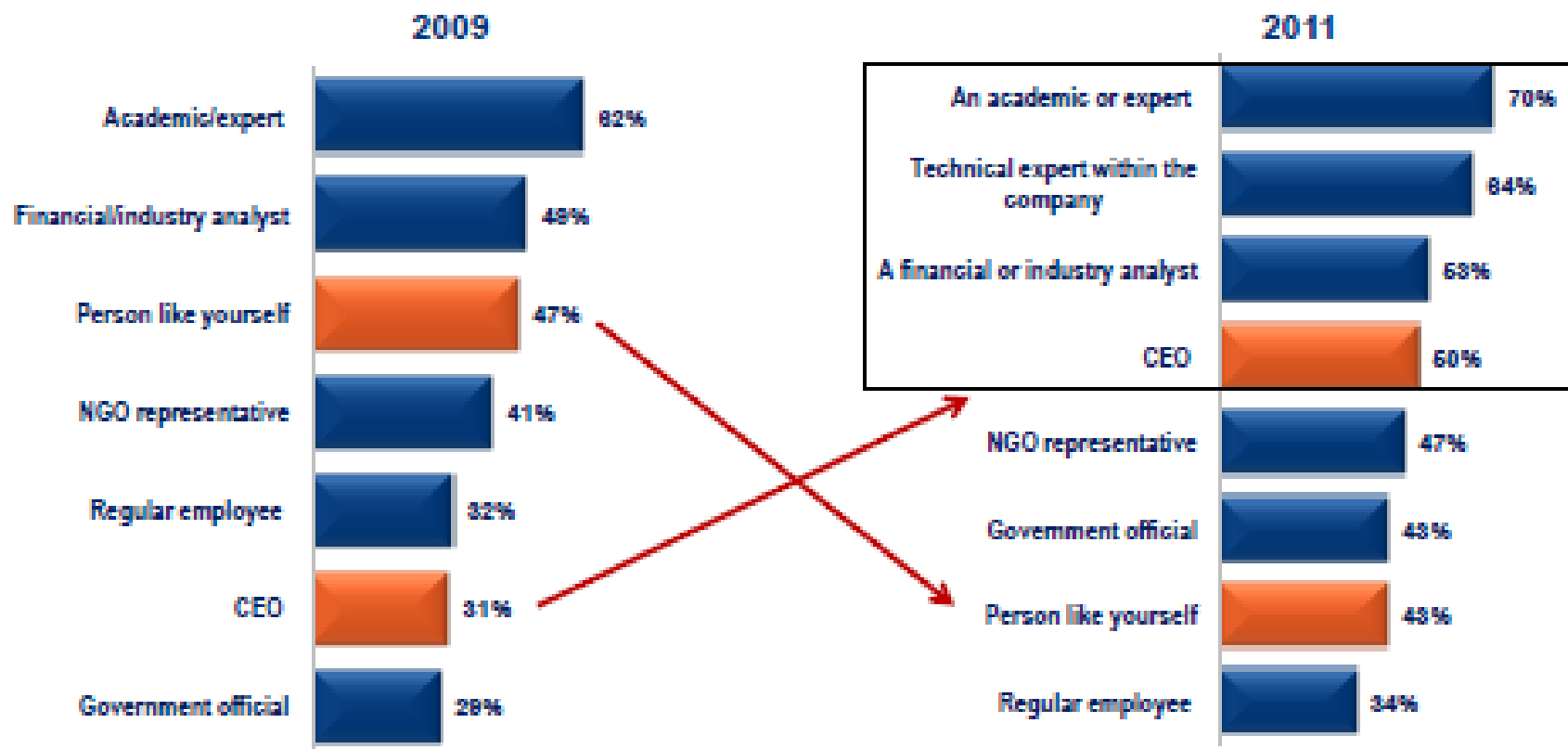
How much do you trust the institution to do what is right?



Responses 6-9 on 1-9 scale; 9=highest; Informed publics ages 25 to 64

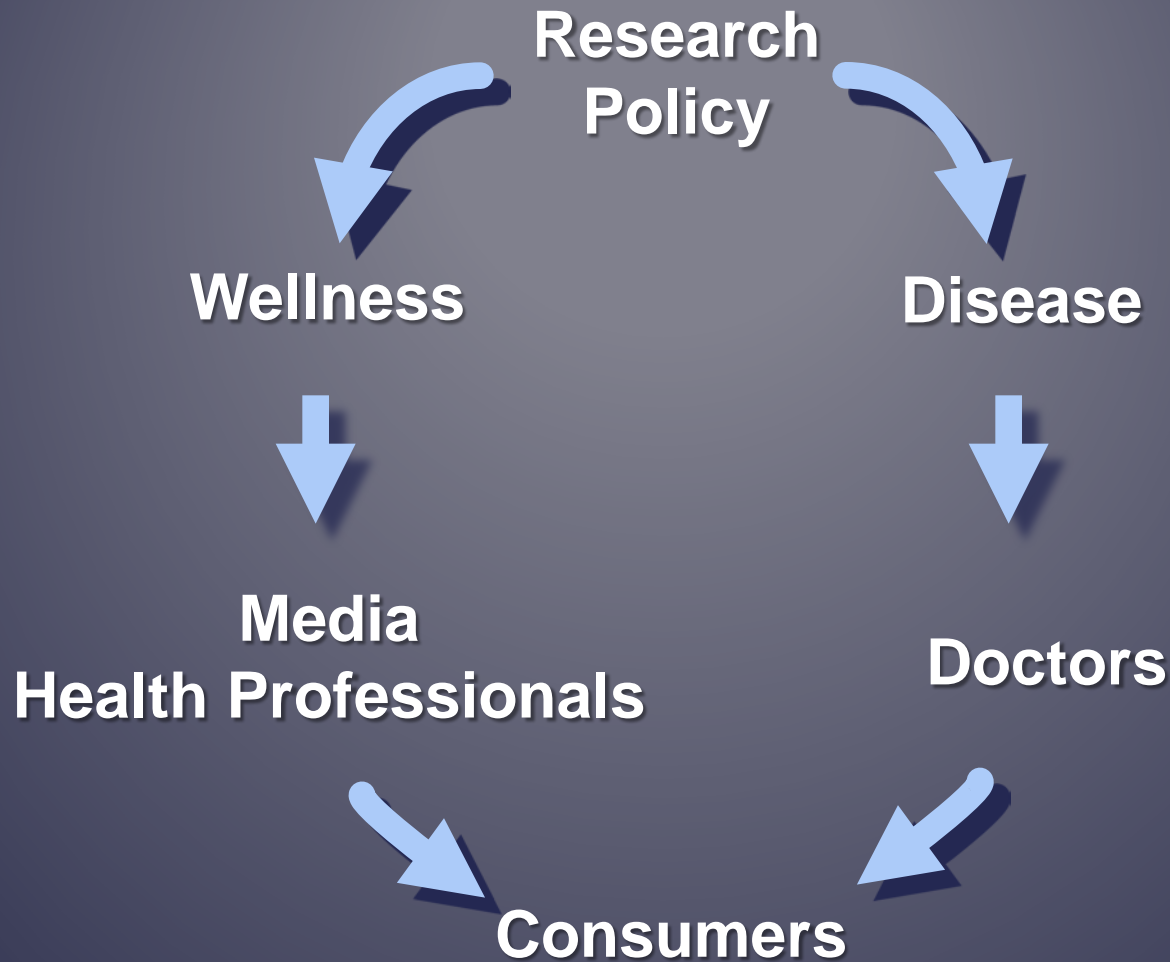
CEOs lead rise in trust in authority, but “person like me” drops amid flight to credentialed spokespeople

If you heard information about a company from one of these people, how credible would that information be?

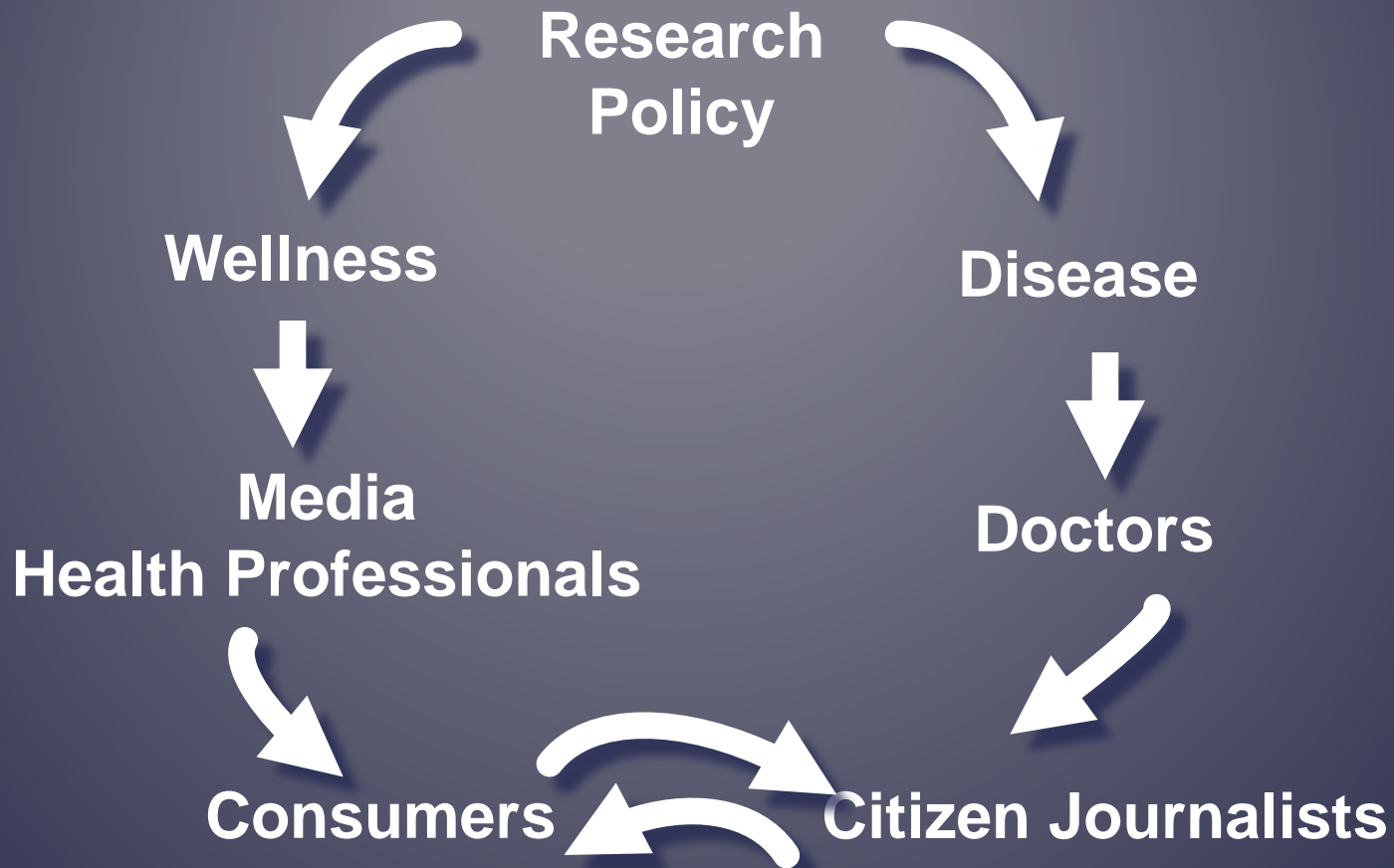


Responses “Extremely credible” and “very credible”; Informed publics ages 25 to 64

The Changing Paradigm



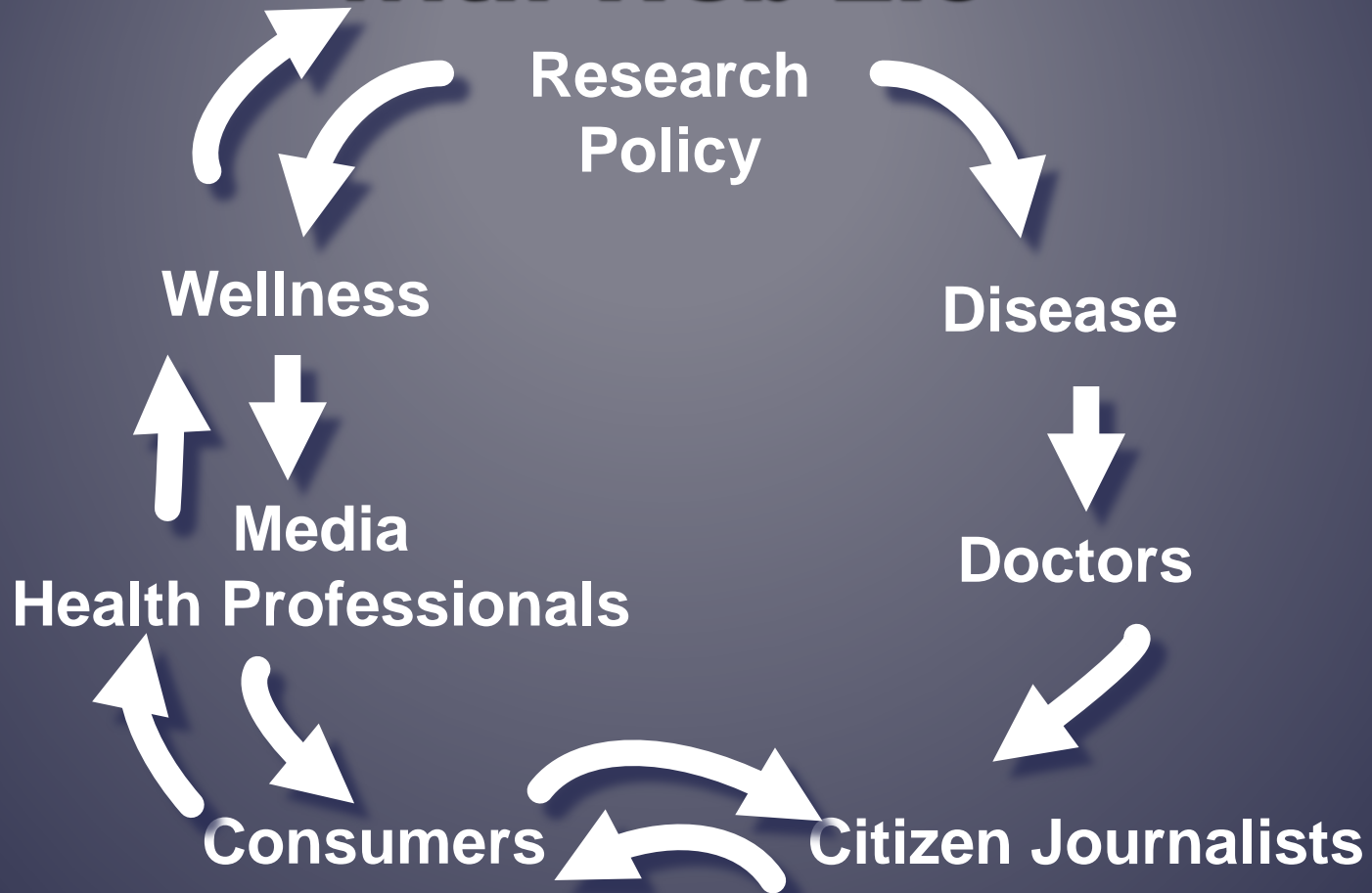
The Changing Paradigm with Web 2.0



The Push

The Changing Paradigm

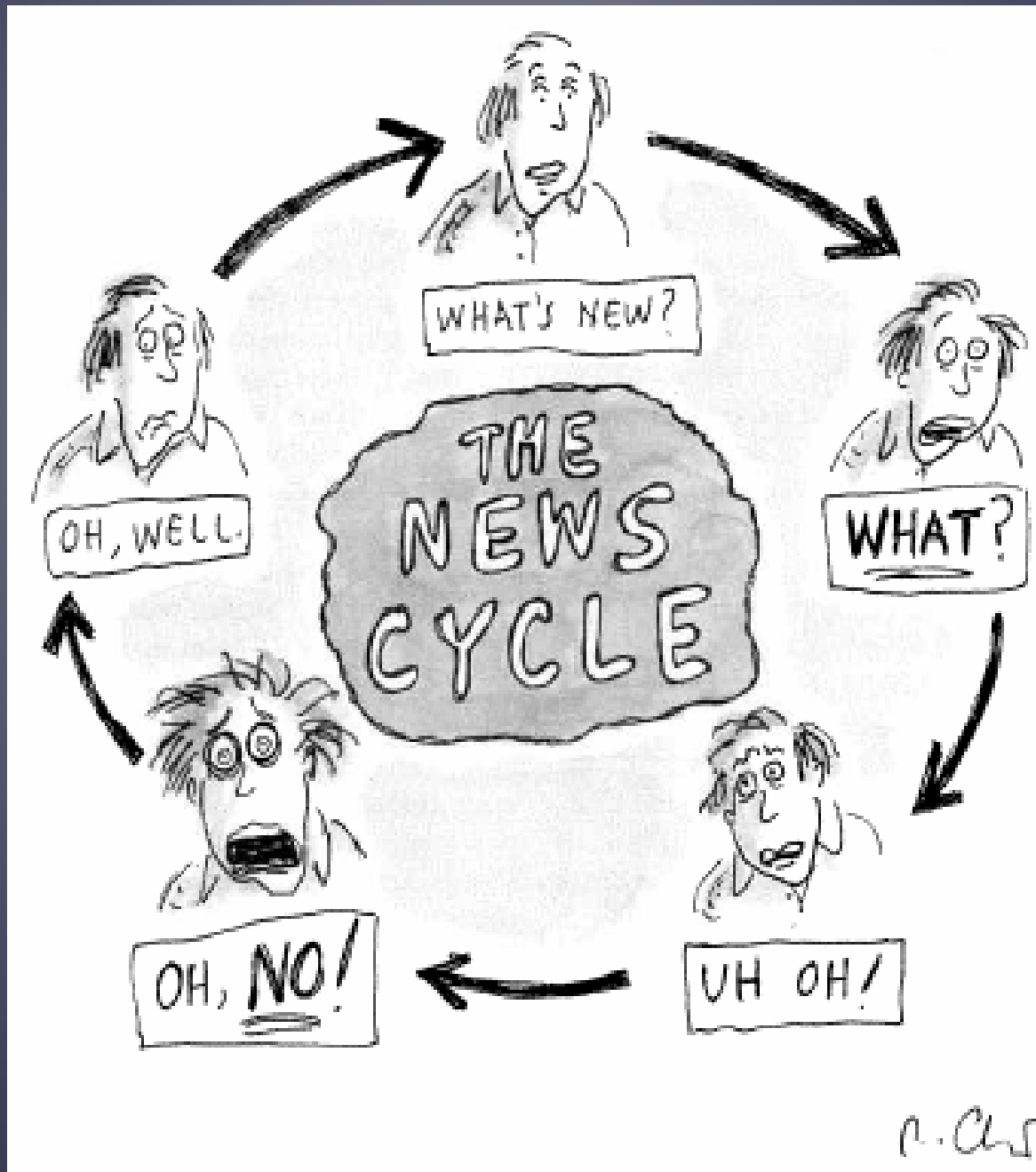
with Web 2.0



The Push

Old media in transition

- *24 Hour Coverage – News on demand*
- *Proliferation of viewing/listening options including Internet, Pod-casts, Blogs, etc.*
- *Pressure for something “new” every 45 seconds*
- *Fewer TV medical/health/science reporters or qualified print food, science, and health editors/writers*
- *Critical role of wire services*
- *News aggregation*
- *Decline of the gatekeepers*
- *Increasing verticality of media ownership*
- *Increasing globalization of media*
- *Imbalance for the sake of balance*
- *24 Hour Coverage – News on demand*



THE SCIENCE NEWS CYCLE



Start Here

Your Research
Conclusion: **A is correlated with B ($p=0.56$)**, given C, assuming D and under E conditions.



...is translated by...

UNIVERSITY PR OFFICE
(YES, YOU HAVE ONE)
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
SCIENTISTS FIND POTENTIAL LINK BETWEEN A AND B (UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS).



...which is then picked up by...

NEWS WIRE ORGANIZATIONS
A CAUSES B, SAY SCIENTISTS.



...who are read by ...

THE INTERNETS

Scientists out to kill us again.
POSTED BY RANDOM DUDE
Comments (377)
OMG! i kneew ittl!
WTH????????
...



...then noticed by...

We saw it on a Blog!
A causes B all the time
What will this mean for Obama?
BREAKING NEWS BREAKING NEWS BREA

CNC Cable NEWS



...and caught on ...

4 LOCAL EYEWITLESS NEWS



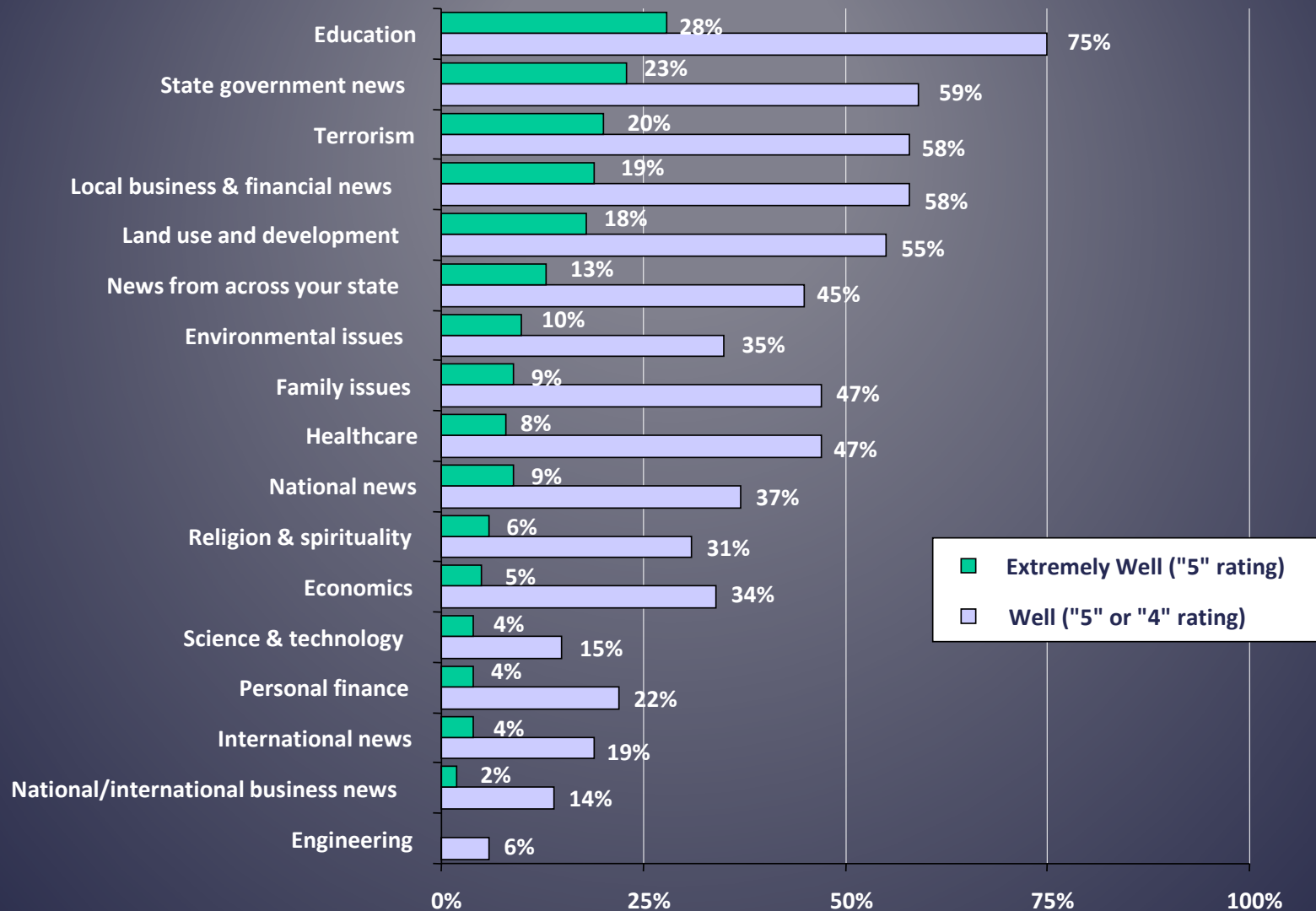
WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT "A"... CAN KILL YOU! MORE AT 11...

...eventually making it to...

YOUR GRANDMA



Preparedness of journalists



The World Wide Web is “the journalism of opinion, ideology and propaganda where facts are fit into opinion.”

American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS)

Communicating across all channels



Who are the experts?

- **Scientific researchers and journals**
- **Disease-oriented health organizations**
- **Public health and government agencies**
- **Medical and health professionals**
- **Community-based professionals**
- **Popular culture figures/book authors**
- **Neighbors and friends**

The importance of context

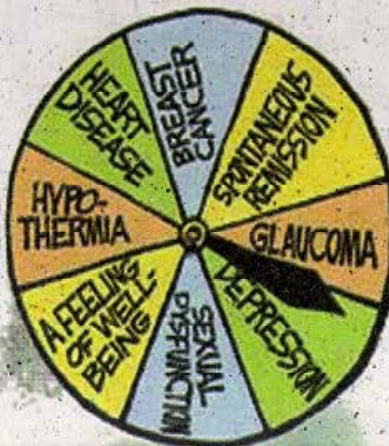
Today's Random Medical News

from the New England
Journal of
Panic-Inducing
Gobbledygook

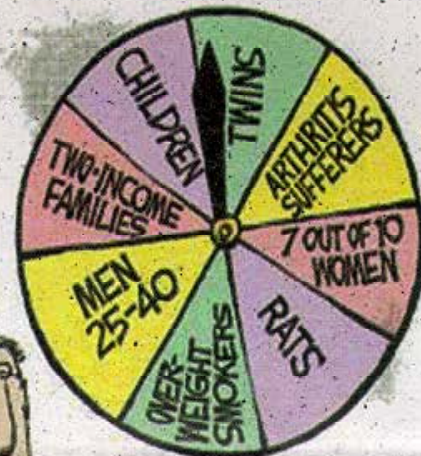
JIM BORGMAN



CAN CAUSE



IN



ACCORDING TO A
REPORT RELEASED
TODAY....

NEWS

Engage the journalists

“Journalists are more compelled to understand scientists than scientists are journalists.”

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Consensus



Conflict

Strategic rules

- Take charge of the interview **at earliest opportunity** (because that is what any interaction with media/interested parties is – **an opportunity**)
- Deliver your message(s) (in your own words – those messages should be burned into your brain)
- Use the occasion to promote ILSI and its mission (every interaction/opportunity is a chance to do what the mission statement says you do)

New ground rules for communicating

- Communications must be structured so as to be “heard” above the media- environment
- The immediate information environment must be taken into account and messages structured and delivered accordingly
- Communicators must have respect for and exploit the increasingly foreshortened “news cycle”
- Messaging must conform to new media *style* of communication
- Multiple information channels must be employed simultaneously, traditional as well as new media channels
- Multi-disciplinary approaches are critical

Media Relations Primer

What's your agenda?

What do you wish to accomplish by communicating your information?

Media Relations Primer

- You need a message or messages
- You need a bottom line
- You need to position yourself

How to Position Yourself

- ▶ **As the expert who is always available**
- ▶ **As a media-friendly (that also means: consumer-friendly) nutrition communicator**
- ▶ **As someone who understands and sympathizes with media deadlines and requirements**
- ▶ **As an expert patient enough to provide the background to new research or the latest media story**
- ▶ **As an expert knowledgeable broadly (as opposed to narrowly) about the issue and with colleagues to refer for further information and quotes**

Message Development

▶ Main Question:

- What do you want the public to understand about your science research and programs?

Message Development

The International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) is a nonprofit, worldwide organization whose mission is to provide science that improves public health and well-being.

Message Development

It achieves this mission by fostering collaboration among experts from academia, government, and industry on conducting, gathering, summarizing, and disseminating science. Its activities focus primarily on nutrition and health promotion; food safety; risk assessment; and the environment.

Message Development

- Prepare, prepare, prepare

“An interview is not the place for original thinking”

Message ideas

- ILSI, NA is transparent: check out the website, www.ilsi.org
- ILSI exists to sponsor relevant research programs, professional education programs and workshops, seminars, and publications
- ILSI provides a neutral forum for government, academic, and industry scientists to discuss and resolve scientific issues of common concern for the well-being of the general public
- All ILSI projects have a primary public purpose and benefit, and must address issues of broad public health interest

Message ideas

- ILSI believes that ensuring balance of perspectives is the most appropriate way to ensure that the impact of any potential conflict of interest or bias is minimized and does not exert an undue influence on the scientific process
- ILSI NA has authored and promoted a paper setting out guidelines to be followed by scientists and funders of research – this paper was published simultaneously in six peer-reviewed journals in 2010

Engage the Journalists

- Don't treat the media as the enemy
- Prepare something to say and how to say it
- Prepare – the journalists want the facts communicated clearly
- Understand and respect the realities of the news media
- Be honest, but know your rights
- Don't say no or no opinion unless you absolutely have to
- Build relationships with journalists you can trust

Managing the Communications Conundrum

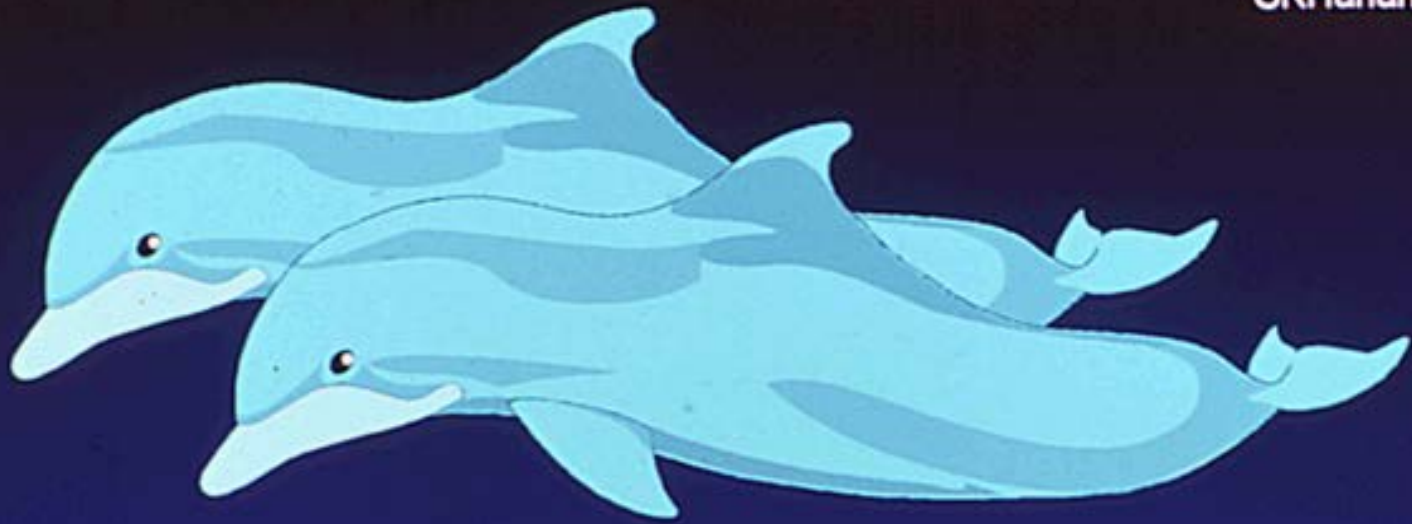
- Put evolving research into context with existing science
- Teach that scientists have opinions just as consumers do
- Teach that science is not in a state of confusion but rather in a state of continual change

➤ Resources:

*Improving Public Understanding (IFIC Foundation/
Harvard School of Public Health)*

Science and the Public Interest (The Royal Society)

SKHarlander



“Although humans make sounds with their mouths and occasionally look at each other, there is no solid evidence that they actually communicate among themselves”