# How to Communicate the Right Amount of Information in an Emergency
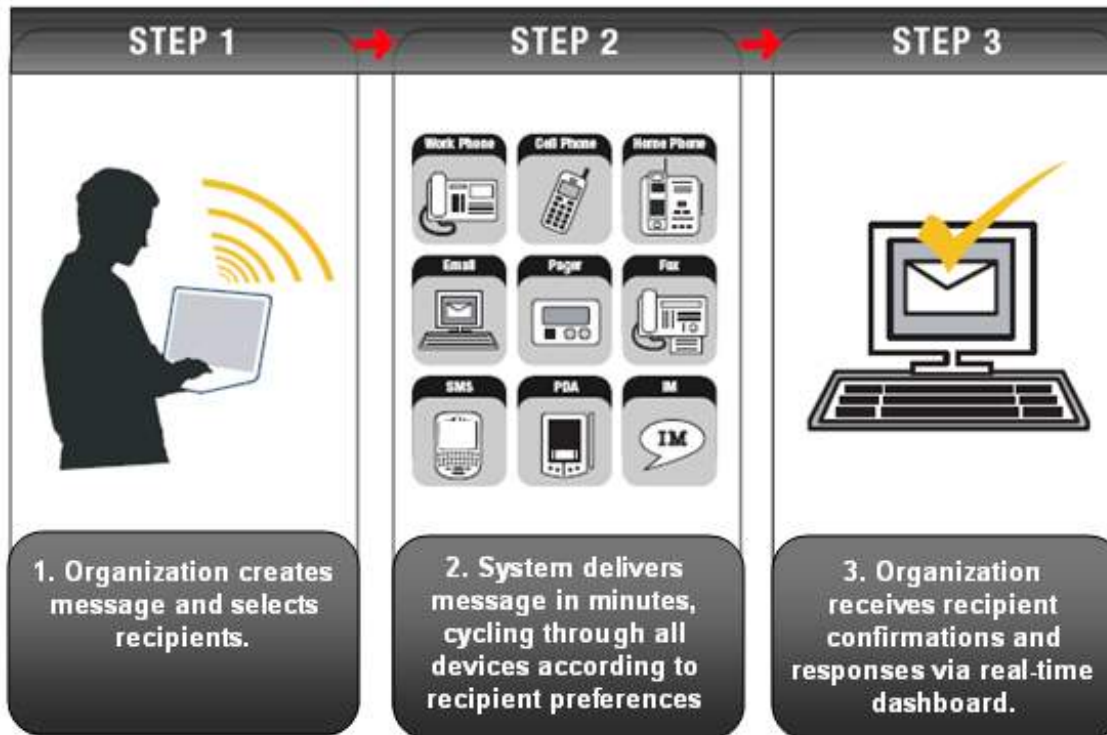
**Robert C. Chandler, Ph.D.**
**Pepperdine University**

# About 3n

**3n's Vision:** A world in which communication to many is as simple and effective as communication to one.



The **3n mass notification system** enables one person to contacts tens, hundreds, or thousands of people anywhere, anytime, and on any device— including phone, computer, PDA, pager, email, text massaging, fax, and instant messaging.

www.3nonline.com

# Today's speakers

- **Speaker:**
  Robert C. Chandler, Ph.D.
  Pepperdine University

- **Moderator:**
  Marc Ladin
  Vice President, 3n

**3n**

## Part 1 (45 minutes)

- Challenges and consequences of information inadequacy

- How information is processed during a crisis

- How communication patterns affect decision-making during a crisis

- Tips for ensuring appropriate information flow in an emergency

## Part 2: Q&A (15 minutes)

# Q&A session



Use the **Q&A** function to submit questions to All Panelists.

# How to communicate the right amount of information in an emergency

**Robert C. Chandler, Ph.D.**
**Pepperdine University**

- Challenges and consequences of information inadequacy
- How information is processed during a crisis
- How communication patterns affect decision-making during a crisis
- Tips for ensuring appropriate information flow in an emergency

3n

**Effective crisis communication includes just the right amount of information. But:**

- What constitutes the right amount of information?
- How much information is enough?
- How much is too much?

**3n**

## Stress affects comprehension in an emergency.

- **Overloaded** messages—may be too complex for an individual in a crisis to understand or interpret.

- **Underloaded** messages—may not give clear instructions or present clear rationales for action.

**3n**

Messages that contain **too little** (underloaded) *or* **too much** (overloaded) information lead to high rates of communication failure in a crisis

# Challenges and consequences of information inadequacy

**Consequences of informational inadequacy include:**

- Financial loss

- Business disruptions

- Personnel problems

- And possibly even death

**Determine what constitutes the right amount of information by assessing how people understand, interpret, and act on messages.**

**Many factors affect understanding, interpretation, and decision-making during a crisis:**

- Cognitive processing capabilities
- Perceived risk
- Information loading theory
- Attitude-behavioral consistency theory
- Balance theory
- Uncertainty reduction theory
- Situation awareness
- Selective attention
- Reaction time
- Semantic memory

## Cognitive-processing capabilities

- Cognitive processing involves thinking, reasoning, remembering, imagining, or learning

- Cognitive abilities typically decrease as stress increases

- People possess different cognitive abilities and limitations, which in turn affects decision-making capabilities in a crisis

3n

## Perceived situational risk

- People perceive risks differently.

- Unknown risks are perceived to be greater than risks that are well understood.

3n

## Communication theories

- Different theories explore how people process information during a crisis or disaster:

  - Information loading theory

  - Attitude-behavioral consistency theory

  - Balance theory

  - Uncertainty reduction theory
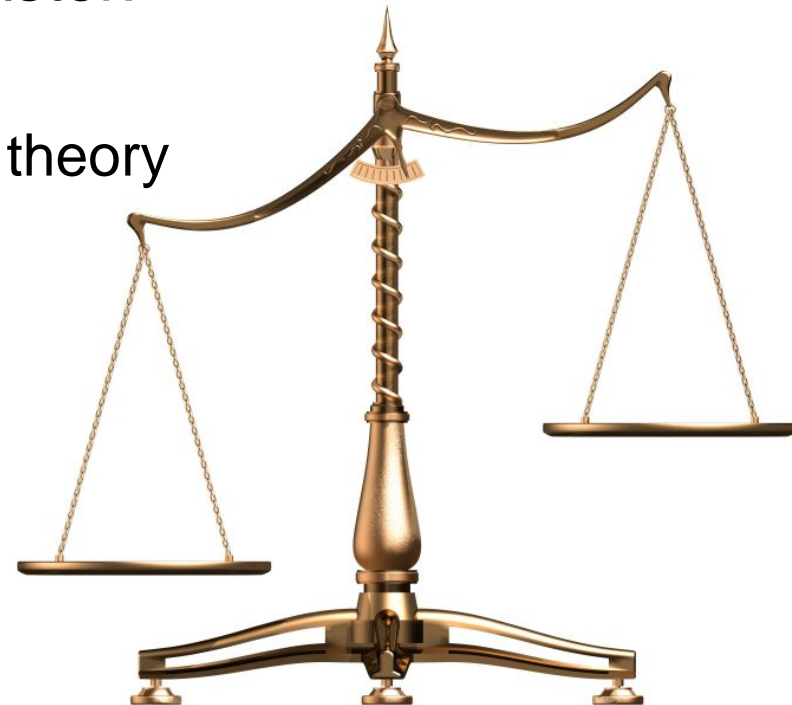
## Situation awareness

- Situation awareness is "knowing what is going on so you can figure out what to do"*

- To function in a crisis, people need to have answers to:
  - What is happening?
  - Why is it happening?
  - What will happen next?
  - What can I do about it?

*Wikipedia*

3n
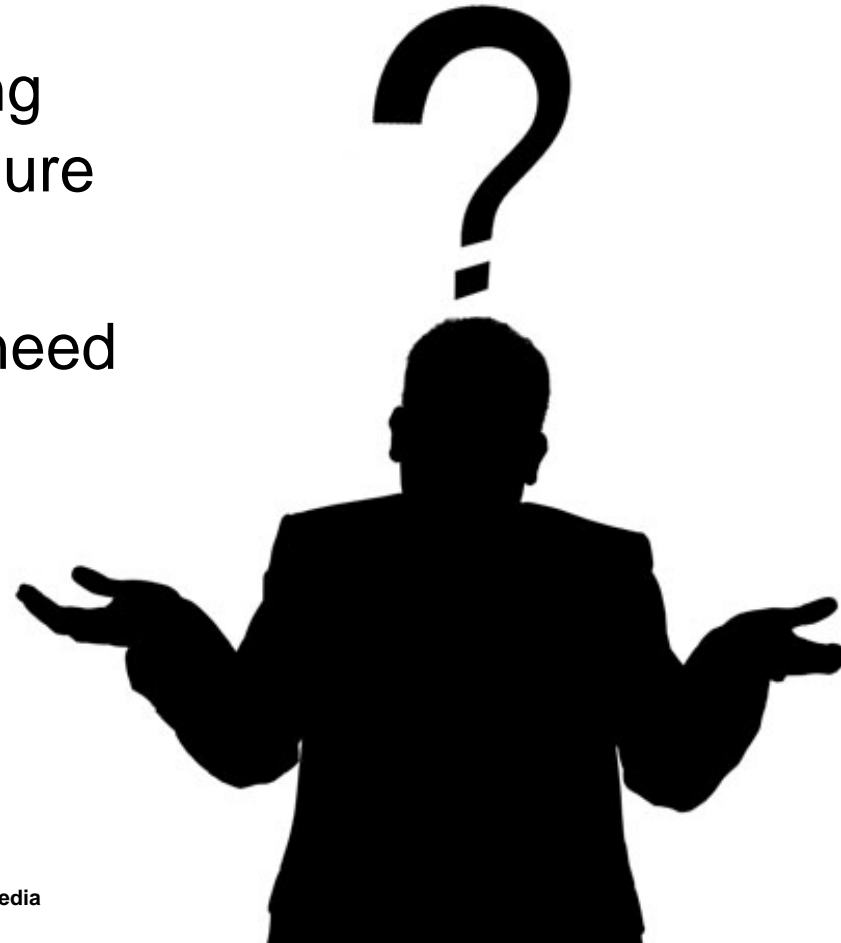
## Selective attention

- Limits what people notice and remember during a crisis
- Conscious vs. unconscious

## Reaction time

- Factors that affect reaction time include:

  - Recognition, choice, number of stimuli, fatigue, reasoning, remembering, imagining, or learning

**3n**

## Semantic memory

- Concept-based knowledge unrelated to specific experiences, eg learning ABCs

- Semantic memory is memory of words, facts, and ideas

- People's semantic memories are usually assumed to be similar (in contrast to episodic memory)

# How communication patterns affect decision making during a crisis
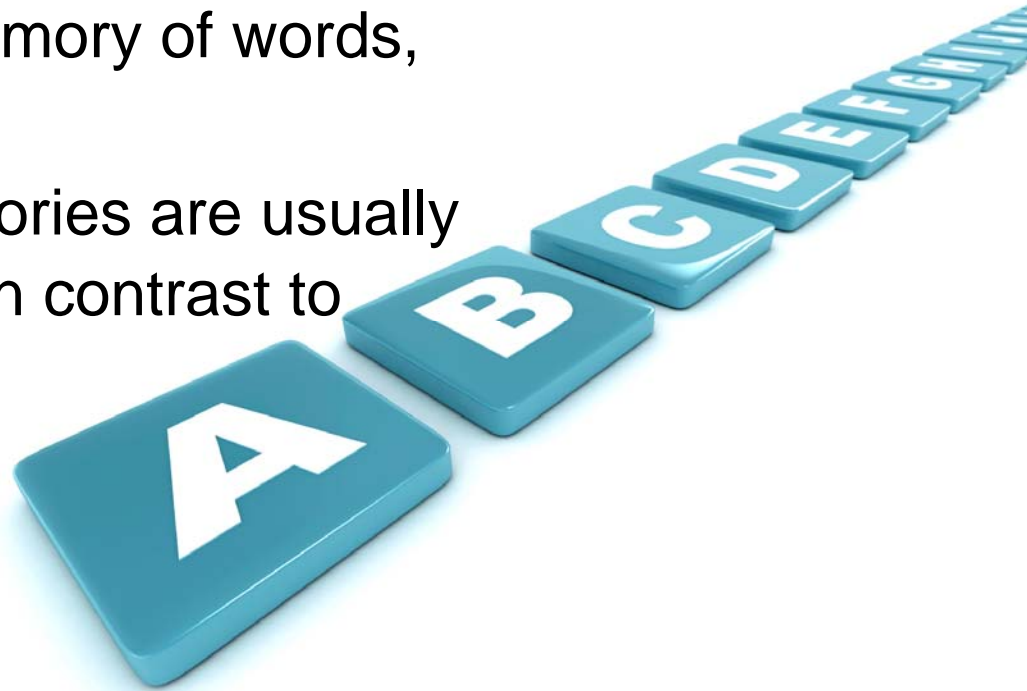
**Communication patterns also affect understanding and decision-making during a crisis:**

- Rules and norms
- Interruptions
  - 47% of communication events classified as interruptions
- Simultaneous communication interaction

- Asynchronous and synchronous
- Information seeking
- Active to passive
- Message variables
  - Grammar
  - Syntax

# Appropriate information flow

**How can we prevent information overload and underload in a crisis?**

- Plan ahead

- Use message mapping and the 3-3-30 rule

- Take into consideration reading comprehension levels of audience

**Message maps help organizations communicate clearly during a pandemic**

Message maps are:

- created prior to outbreaks

- written at or below a 6th-grade reading level

- specific to one organization

- written using the 3-3-30 rule

- sensitive to the needs of different demographic groups

# Appropriate information flow

**3n**
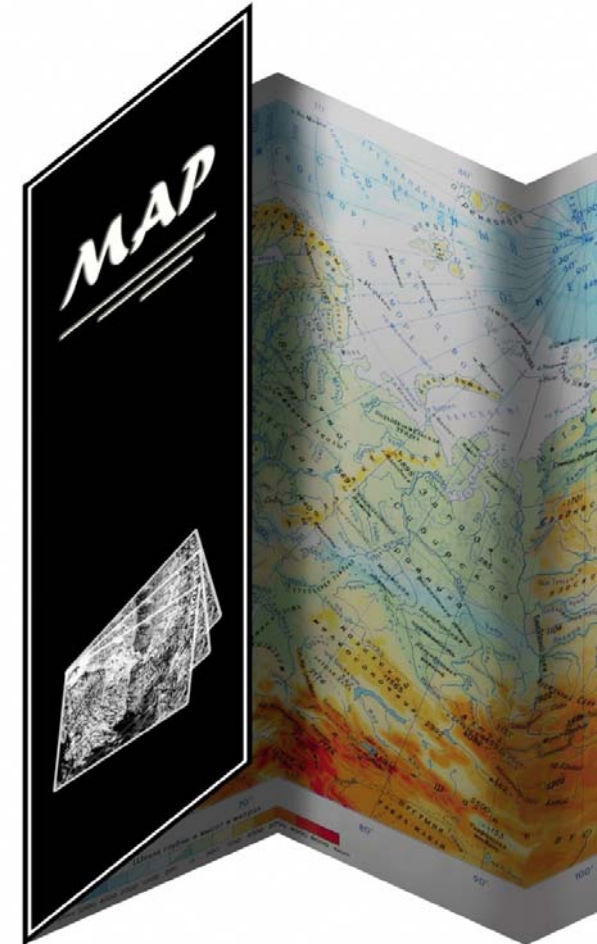
## Message maps are:

- crisis communication tools

- ways to organize complex information

- distillations of complicated messages

- created prior to a crisis or outbreak

## Message maps are *not*:

- long, convoluted dissertations on what to do in a crisis

- written with technical jargon and high-level reading words

- hard to understand

- created during a crisis

**Remember the 3-3-30 rule of emergency communication**

- Message maps reduce important, emergency-relevant concepts to no more than **3 short sentences** that convey **3 key messages** in **30 words or less**.

- Each primary message should have no more than three message points.

# Mass notification addresses common communication challenges

- **Communicate quickly, easily, and efficiently** with large numbers of people in minutes, not hours

- **Use all contact paths** especially when regional or local communication infrastructure is damaged or not working

- **Ensure two-way communications** for better visibility and planning

- **Reduce miscommunications** with accurate, consistent messages

- **Free key personnel** to perform critical tasks by automating manual, time-intensive, error-prone processes

- **Improve communication effectiveness** by eliminating any single point of failure

# 3n Pandemic Communication Solution

3n

✓ *Save time*

✓ *Eliminate guesswork*

✓ *Ensure readiness*

*Pre-built, customizable pandemic communication tools that provide the foundation for a comprehensive pandemic plan and strengthen existing plans*

**Components:**

Pandemic readiness self-audit tool

Chandler Methodology™ message maps

Pandemic preparedness executive presentations

Two-hour executive audio briefing

Pandemic communication plan testing and validation tool

**For more information, call 1-888-366-4911.**

- **Terrorism – How Can Business Continuity Cope? (2004)**
- **Crisis Communication Planning (2005)**
- **Managing Risks for Corporate Integrity (2006)**
- **Disaster Recovery and the News Media (2007)**

**http://www.bcpmedia.org/crisis.html**

**http://www.amazon.com**

# Q&A session

Use the **Q&A** function to submit questions to All Panelists.

# Thank you for attending!

3n

**More information about this session:**
Robert C. Chandler, Ph.D.
Pepperdine University, Center for
Communication and Business
1-310-506-4211
Robert.Chandler@Pepperdine.edu

**Learn about the 3n mass notification system:**
1-888-366-4911
http://www.3nonline.com

**See a 3n system demo on June 21:**
https://www.gotomeeting.com/register/648512298