The IDEA model consists of four components: Internalisation, Distribution, Explanation and Action.

The warning messages and disaster alerts issued in times of crisis can be the difference between life and death.

IDEA IN ACTION

The IDEA model has been used to assess national and local responses to crises, such as the Ebola outbreak in 2014.
Behind the Research

Dr Deanna D. Sellnow
Bio
Deanna D. Sellnow (PhD) is Professor of Strategic Communication at the University of Central Florida. Her research focuses on strategic instructional communication in a variety of contexts including risk, crisis, and health. She has conducted numerous funded research projects and has published in national and international journals.

Dr Timothy L. Sellnow
Bio
Timothy L. Sellnow (PhD) is Professor of Strategic Communication at the University of Central Florida. His research focuses on comprehension of risk communication for mitigating the impact of and maintaining resilience in response to crises. He has co-authored five books including Theorizing Crisis Communication and Effective Risk Communication.

Research Objectives

Profs Deanna and Timothy Sellnow developed the IDEA model for effective strategic communication in times of crisis.

Detail

Adopting the principles of IDEA offers organisations and media outlets the chance to greatly improve disaster communication.

The IDEA model was developed by Profs Deanna and Timothy Sellnow to provide a framework for effective strategic communication in times of crisis. The IDEA model consists of four components: (1) Information, (2) Education, (3) Activation, and (4) Duration. These components help organizations and media outlets to communicate effectively during times of crisis.

For example, the use of IDEA in the context of the Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea (PEDv) outbreak of 2013/14 in the United States’ pork industry, where PEDv is a highly contagious virus that can cause significant economic losses. The PEDv outbreak was a significant event that seriously threatened the pork industry.

The IDEA model provided the framework for effective communication during this crisis, allowing for the dissemination of critical information to stakeholders and the public. This helped to reduce the spread of the virus and mitigate the economic impact on the industry.

Research


References

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Personal Response

Which agencies/organisations have officially adopted the IDEA model?

I am unaware of any agencies or organisations that have “officially” adopted the IDEA model. However, many do use it as a model for effective messaging. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) did ultimately propose it as the model for designing earthquake early warning (EEW) apps in Los Angeles, California (rolled out to the public in 2019). Emergency management organisations that we have worked with across the US have also unoffically adopted it. National public television has applied it to their “Meet the Helpers” video campaign.

Outside of disasters and crises, are there other areas in which the IDEA model could be applied?

The IDEA model was originally grounded in experiential learning theory so it can be applied to numerous communication contexts where the goals are to achieve affective, cognitive, and behavioural learning outcomes. For example, it has been used to examine motivation to attend to (affective), understand (cognitive), and perform (behaviour) in religious organisations (particularly youth group environments), as well as in health care contexts in terms of patient-provider communication, and public school teacher training. It has demonstrated its utility in a variety of American co-cultures (e.g. Native American and African American) and countries (e.g. Sweden, Germany, Hong Kong, Vietnam, India, Senegal, Uganda, Brazil, Indonesia, and Egypt). Essentially, in any situation where the communication outcomes involve motivation, understanding, and/or behaviour (e.g. “learning”), it can prove to be useful.

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