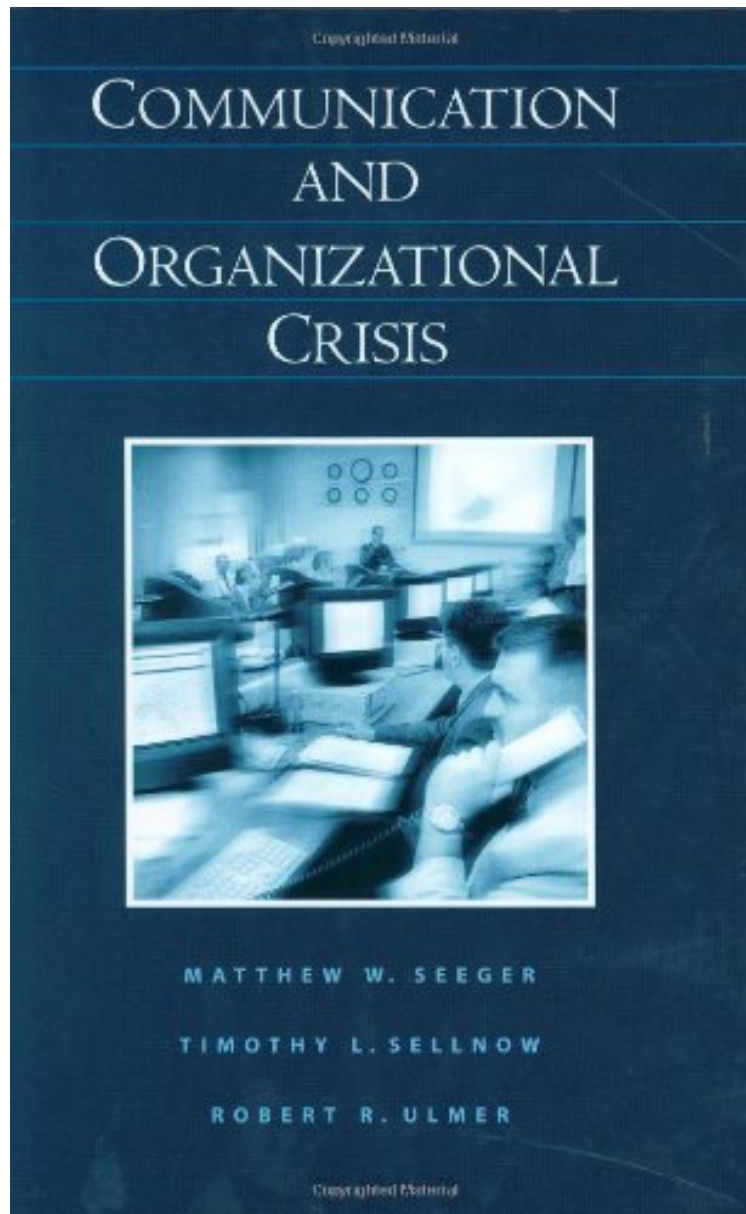


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Communication and Organizational Crisis

Mathew W. Seeger, Timothy L. Sellnow, Robert R. Ulmer

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Crisis events are increasingly common. Their impacts are greater and they are more widely reported in the media than ever before. They often symbolize tragedy and loss, but they are also the precipitating factors in radical, rapid, and frequently positive social change. Understanding the complex dynamics of these powerful events is imperative for both researchers and managers. Taking a broad view of organizational crisis, the authors synthesize a rich and diverse body of theory, research, and practice and apply it to every kind of crisis imaginable, from oil spills to nuclear disasters, airplane crashes, shuttle explosions, and corporate implosions such as Enron. The organization can be anything from a company to a federal bureaucracy or society. Organizational crisis is presented as a natural stage in organizational evolution, creating not only stress and threats but also opportunities for growth and development. Communication is viewed as the pivotal process in the creation and maintenance of organization, and its role is examined here at every stage, from incubation to avoidance, crisis management, and recovery. Researchers, crisis managers, and communications managers will find a wealth of applied theoretical orientations, including chaos theory, sensemaking, organizational learning theory, and more.

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