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How to Leverage Social Media for University Emergency Communications: A Holistic Approach

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SARA ESTES COHEN has ten years of experience in communications and three years specifically focused in Emergency Response, Continuity of Operations (COOP), Business Continuity, and Critical Infrastructure Protection. She has worked in the federal, local, and private sectors.

Ms. Cohen has participated and led in COOP and related emergency preparedness and response planning for several federal agencies, as well as the City of Beverly Hills and the University of California, Los Angeles, and has developed community education, training and evaluation programs. She has also served as a subject-matter expert in Pandemic Influenza planning for the University of California Center for Public Health and Disasters. For her master's thesis, entitled, "Using Social Networking for University Emergency Communications," Ms. Cohen worked with Myspace.com/Fox Interactive and UCLA to develop a model for universities to engage in social media for emergency communications, and presented her findings at several university communications symposiums throughout the year.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Ms. Cohen managed the national and international crisis communications campaigns for the New Orleans-based Preservation Hall Jazz Band and Music Hall. She also worked in collaboration with the Tipitina's Foundation and Black Entertainment Television (BET) on both the Radio City Music Hall Katrina fundraiser and BET Katrina telethon, in September of 2005.

Ms. Cohen has also worked as a freelance writer, having written articles for *Downbeat Magazine*, *Jambase Online*, *Antigravity Magazine*, *Gambit Weekly* and *Where Y'At Magazine*.

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Agenda

- **What is Social Media?**
- **Social Media Tools**
- **Social Media Definitions**
- **What is Twitter?**
- **Organizations Using Social Media**
- **Elements of a Holistic Social Media Program**
- **Potential Issues and Concerns**
- **A Case Study: Proactive Messaging**
- **Using Social Media in Recovery**
- **Questions and Discussion**

What is Social Media?

“A fusion of sociology and technology, transforming monologues (one to many) into dialogues (many to many)...in essence, the democratization of information.”

- Wikipedia.org



Current Social Media Tools Include:

- Forums/Comment Boards
- Weblogs, Social Blogs, Microblogs, and Websites
- Wikis
- Pod/Vodcasts
- Collaborative and Interactive Media
- Picture and Music-sharing
- News Aggregators/RSS and Social News
- Social Bookmarking
- Social Tagging
- Instant Messaging
- Trending
- Virtual Worlds
- RIFDs
- Widgets
- SMS



Social Media Definitions

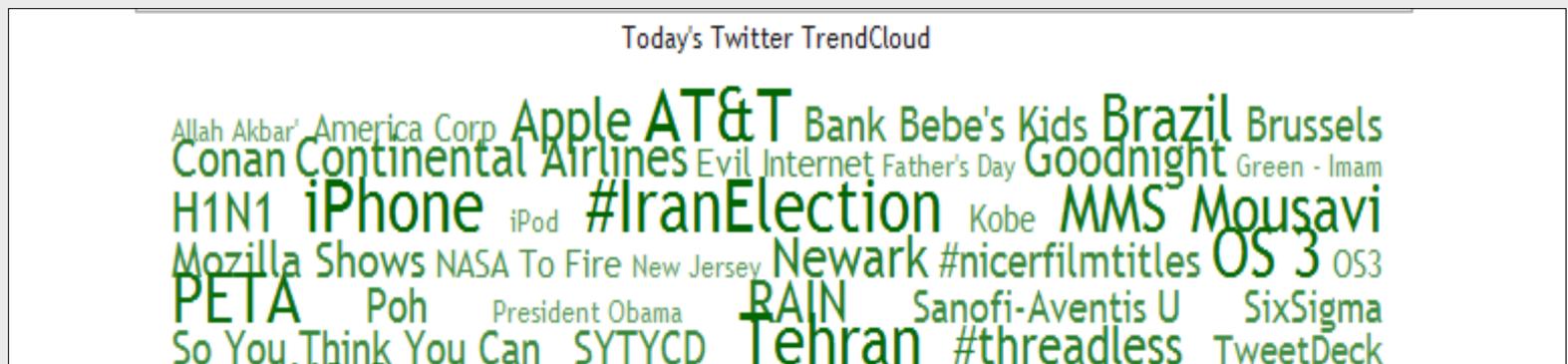
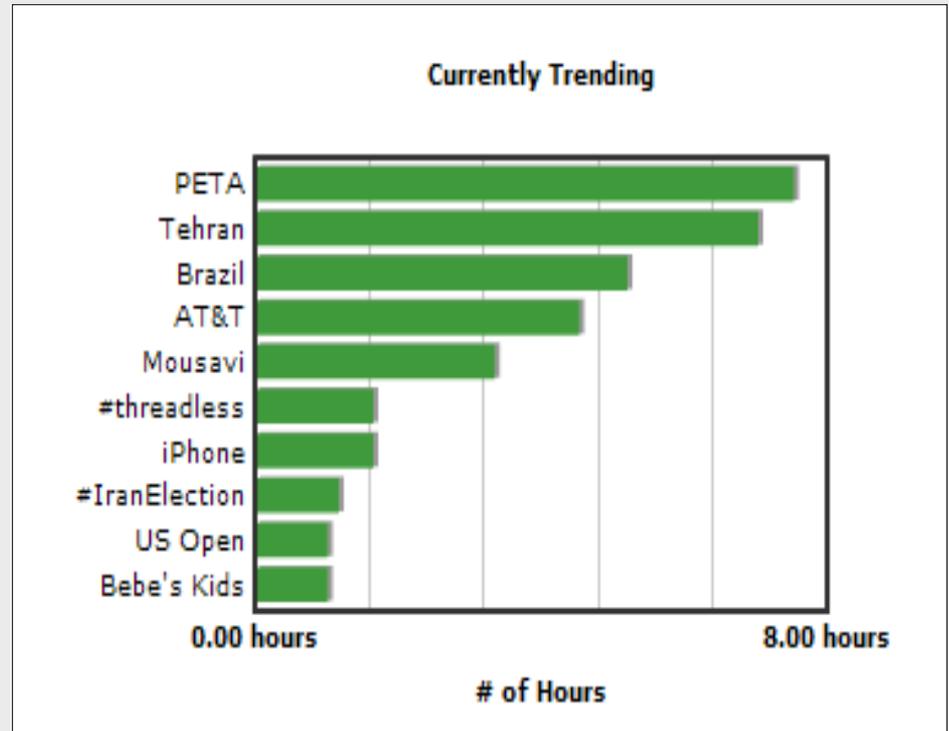
- **Blog:** A user-generated Website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in reverse chronological order.
- **Podcast/Vodcast:** A user-generated or commercially produced audio or video file available for use on computers or portable media devices.
- **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID):** A technology similar to bar code identification, electromagnetic or electrostatic coupling in the Radio Frequency portion of the electromagnetic spectrum is used to transmit signals.
- **RSS:** “Really Simple Syndication.” The latest method of delivering content from the Internet for personal viewing. Individuals can “subscribe” to published materials via an RSS reader (email, online banner, desk-top widget).
- **Social Book Marking:** A method in which users can store, classify, share, and search each other’s bookmarks online.
- **Social Networking:** A method by which users share text, audio, and/or video content through people-to-people connections via web-based tools.

Definitions continued...

- **Virtual Worlds:** A computer-based simulated environment created for users to inhabit and interact with each other via avatars (user-created online profiles).
- **Web 2.0:** Considered the second generation of web development and web design, characterized as facilitating communication, information sharing, interoperability, user-generated material, and collaboration on the World Wide Web.
- **Websites:** Internet based interfaces that store content, documents, creates customer interfaces, and process commercial or public transactions.
- **Widgets:** A graphical user interface that allows users to pull in information and display data from other sources (on desktop, website, etc.).
- **Wiki:** A collaboration tool/shared information source that allows anyone to edit content within the online environment (example: Wikipedia.org).

What Is Twitter?

- Microblogging
- Subscription-based
- Trending
- Direct Messaging
- Search Function
- Viral Communication (What is a Retweet?)



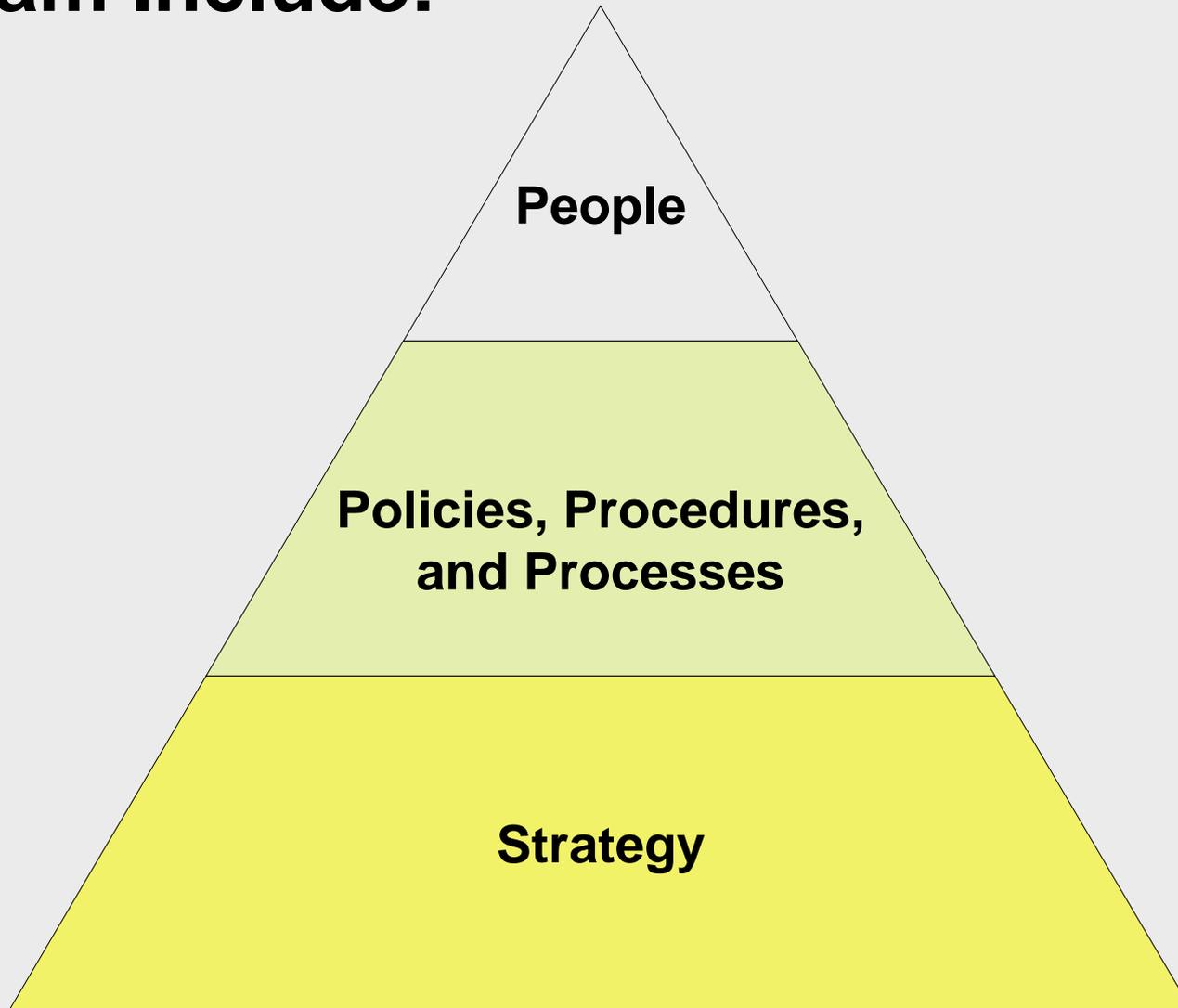
Organizations Using Social Media



FEMA



Elements of a Holistic Social Media Program Include:



Strategy

➤ **Goals and Objectives**

- Scope and purpose
- Alert/Notification
- Situational awareness

➤ **Reach**

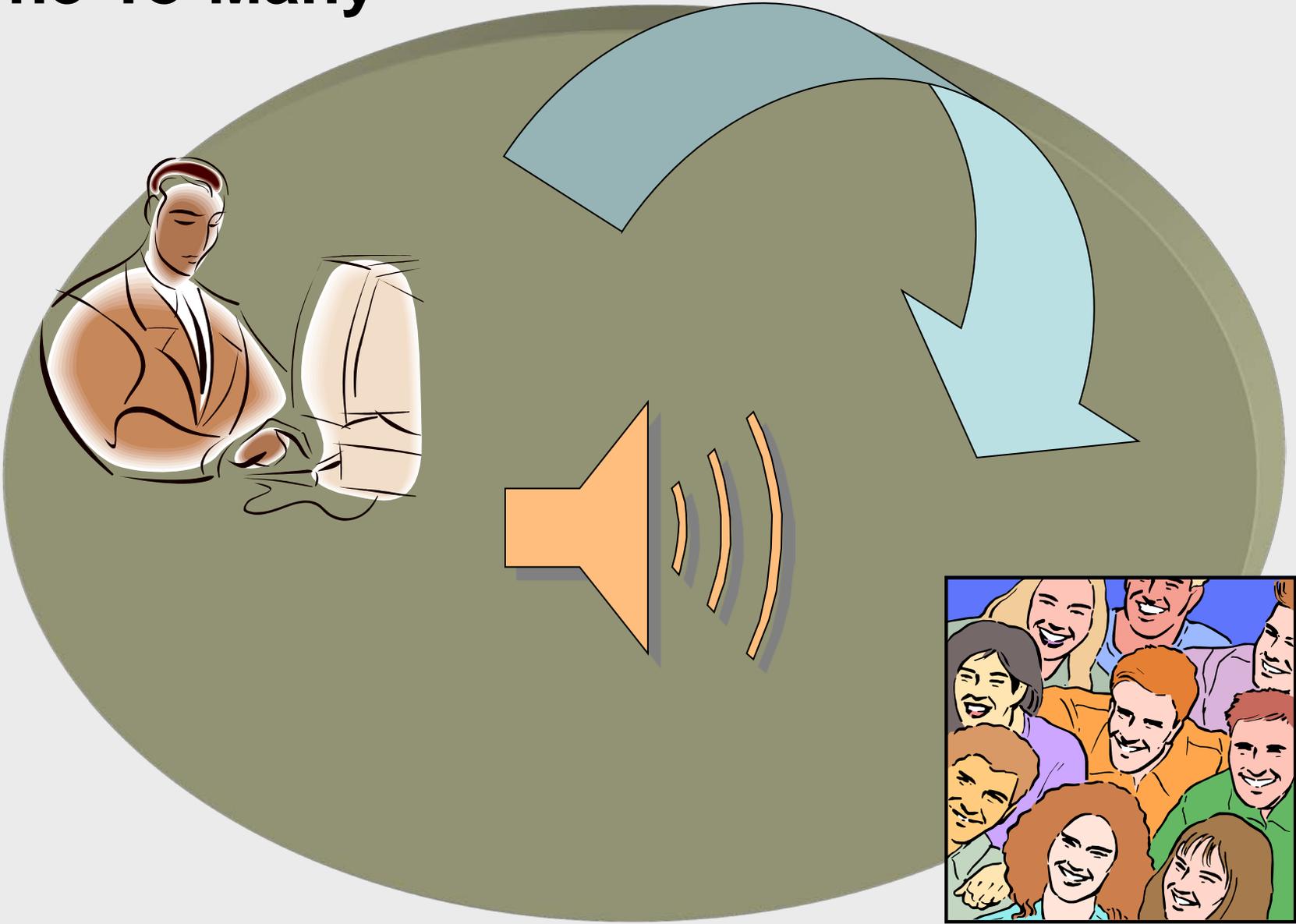
- Level of participation
- Audience

➤ **Communication: Feedback Loop**

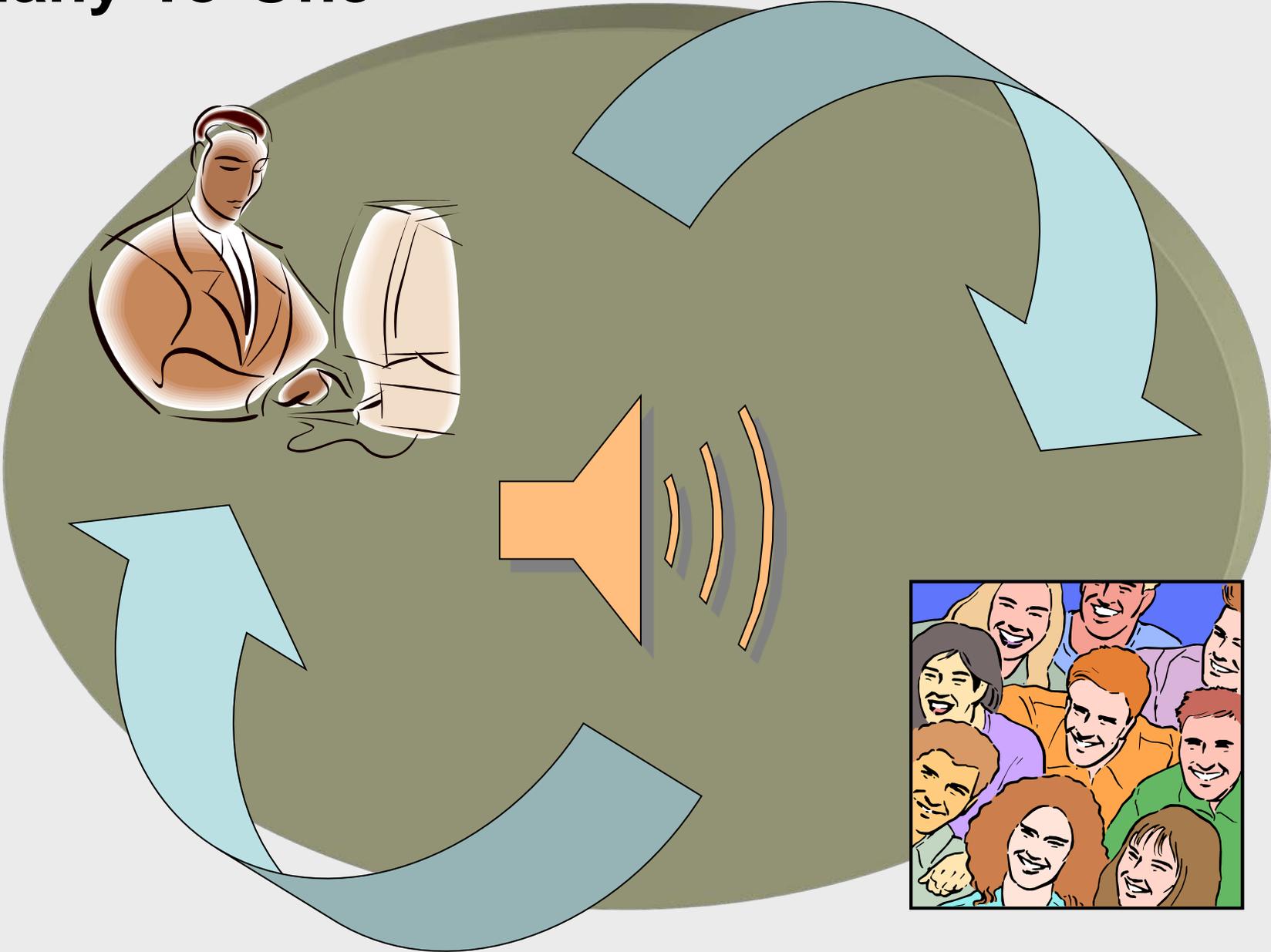
- One-to-many
- Many-to-one
- Many-to-many



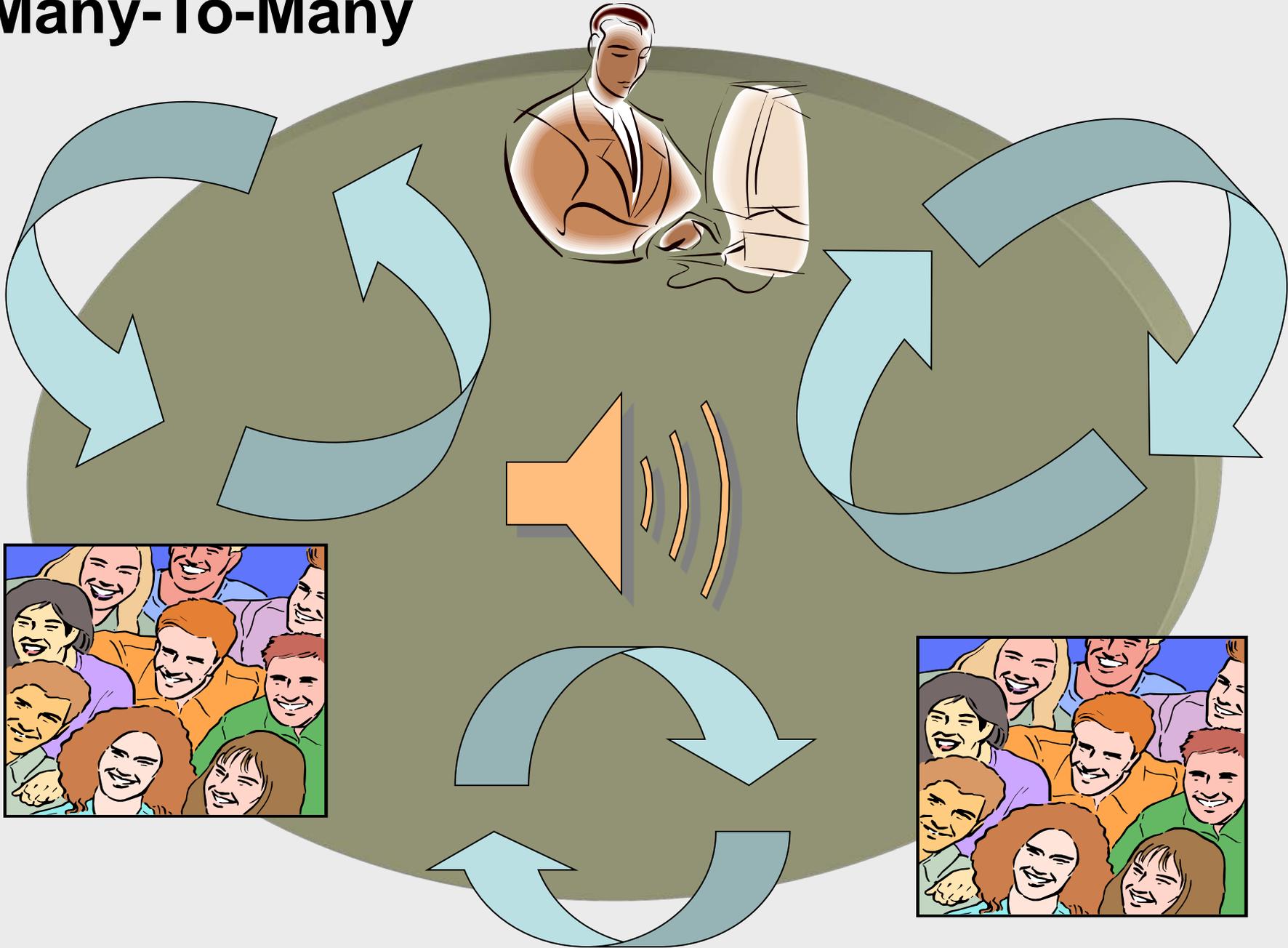
One-To-Many



Many-To-One



Many-To-Many



Strategy continued...

➤ Risk Management

- Internet “Footprint” and potential risk
- Cost effectiveness and appropriateness

➤ Community Partnerships

- Outline roles and responsibilities
- Overlapping jurisdictions
- Shared resources

➤ Technology/Tools

- Survey of common communications trends/tools on campus
- Maintaining awareness of emerging technologies

➤ Flexibility

- Adoption vs. Adaptation
- Future planning (What’s Next?)



Policies, Procedures, and Processes

➤ Roles/Responsibilities

- Emergency Management/Public Safety
- Communications/Public Affairs

➤ Policy Development

- Participation/Use
- Human Resources
- Security/Privacy
- Internet “Footprint”
- Access/Log-in

➤ Capacity

- Bandwidth
- Mirrored/Redundant servers
- Technical requirements
- Cost effectiveness and appropriateness



Policies, Procedures, and Processes continued...

➤ **Integration Plan**

- Pertaining state/federal guidance
- Cost effectiveness and appropriateness

➤ **Implementation Plan (Phased)**

- Phase 1: Partial adoption
- Phase 2: Moderate adoption
- Phase 3: Full adoption



Policies, Procedures, and Processes continued...

➤ **Crisis and Risk Communication**

- Misinformation
- Rumor Control

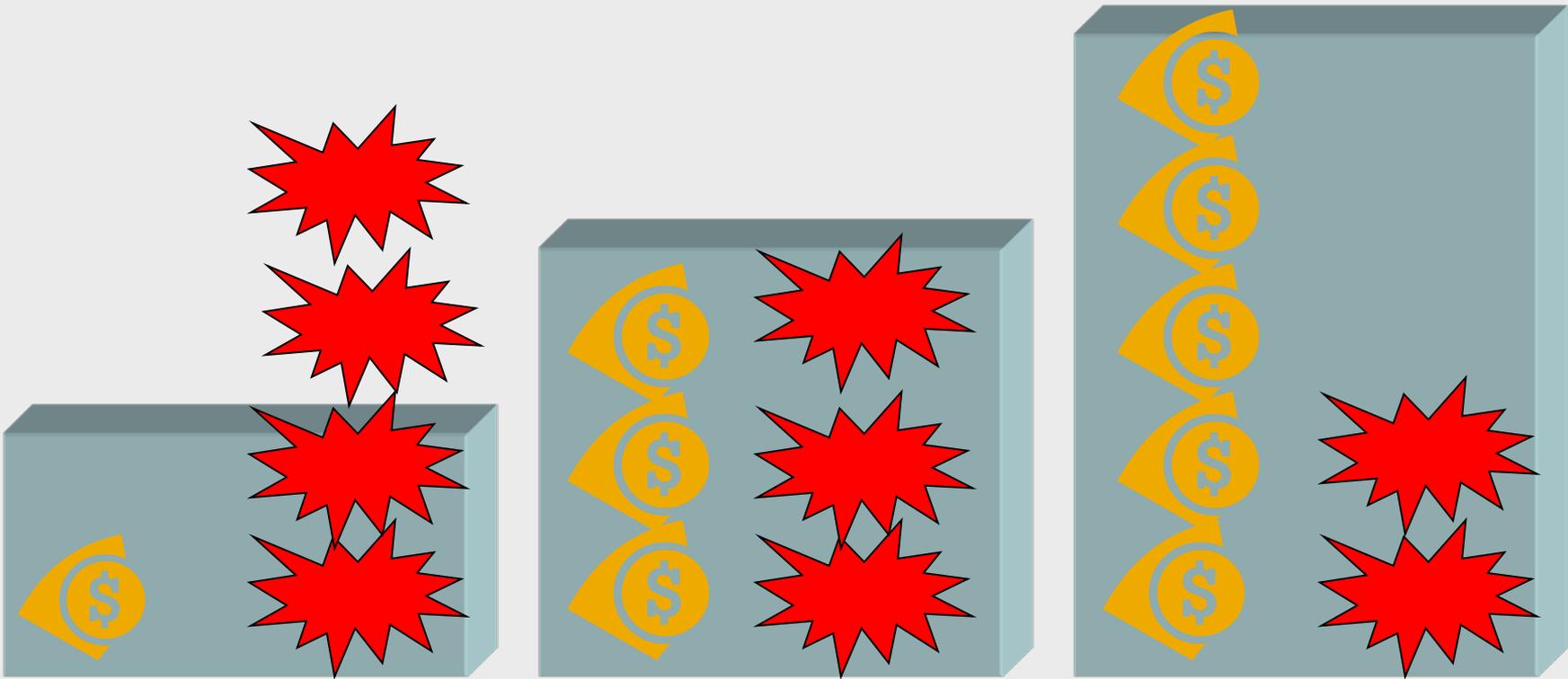
➤ **Processes/Procedures**

- Maintenance
- Registration
- Notification/Prompting
- Messaging



Phased Implementation

SHORT-TERM Cost/Benefit Analysis



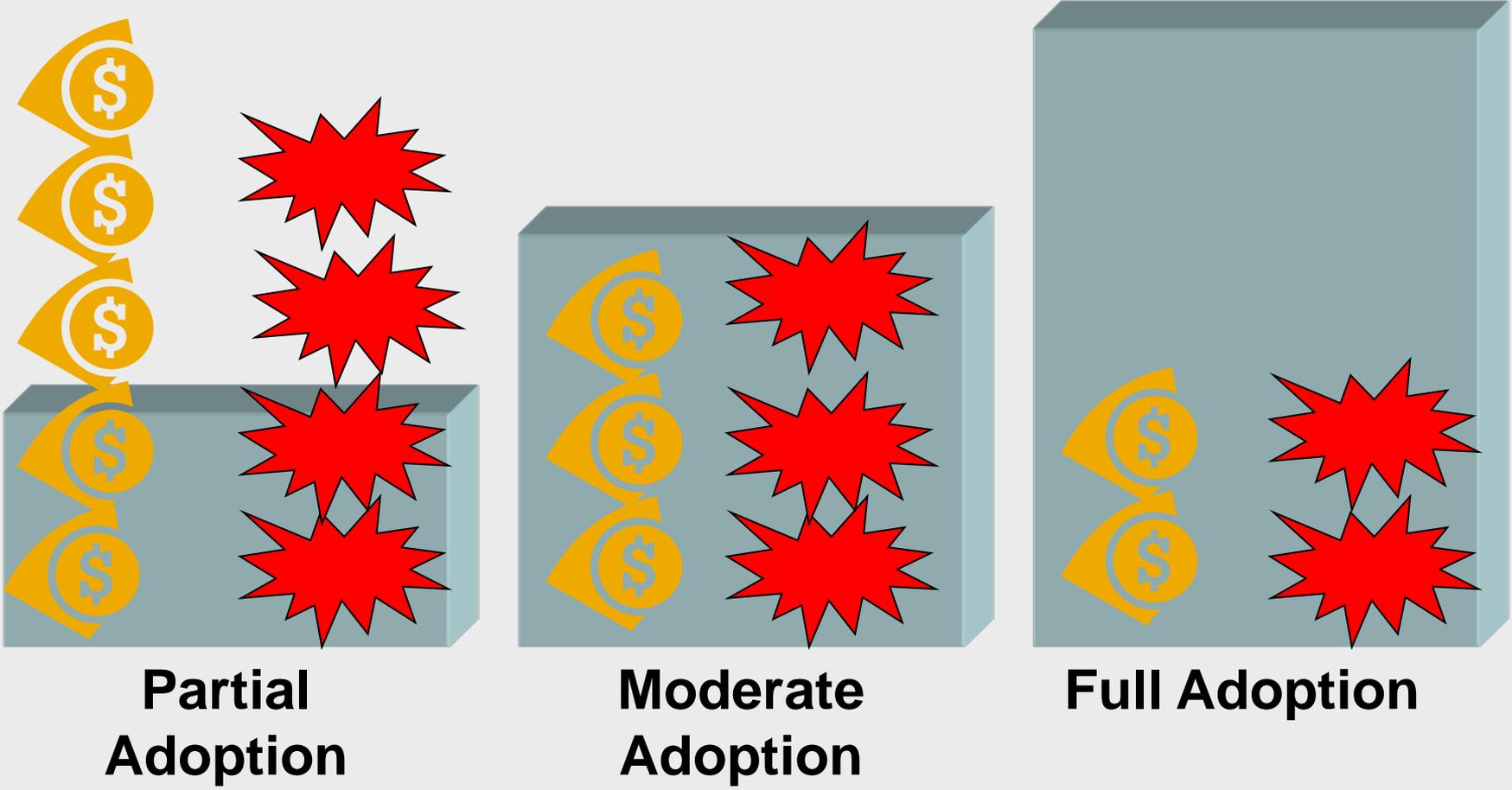
Partial Adoption

Moderate Adoption

Full Adoption

Phased Implementation

LONG-TERM Cost/Benefit Analysis



Phased Implementation: Costs/Benefits

Tier	Cost	Benefit
<p>Partial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reactive • Higher security risks • Privacy issues • Unengaged/unaware students • Conflicting roles and responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap • Quick • Resource-light
<p>Moderate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting roles and responsibilities • Only partially secure (without strong awareness of full risk) • More costly OVER TIME with adoption of new technologies and re-fitting policies/procedures, responsibilities, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More robust than partial adoption • Good interim solution • Allows time to develop buy-in from late adopters • Less resource-intensive than Full option in SHORT TERM
<p>FULL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resource and labor-intensive in SHORT TERM • Larger Internet Footprint produces greater risk if not addressed • May be more difficult to obtain buy-in from all concerned stakeholders (initially) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheapest in LONG TERM • Robust/flexible solution • Engaged users, partners • Greater awareness and control of information (Proactive) • Greater support and security • Can adapt to emerging technologies and communications trends over time

Potential Issues and Concerns

- **Who Is Your Audience?**
- **Stakeholder Buy-In**
- **Reaction vs. Interaction (Proactive)**
- **Misinformation and Rumor Control**
- **Security, Privacy, and Access**
- **Flexibility (Adaptation vs. Adoption)**
- **Brand/Image Control**
- **Content Management and Maintenance**

People

- **Outreach/Education**
- **Training and Etiquette (“Safe Surfing”)**
- **Community Partners**
- **Profile Maintenance**
- **Participation and Engagement**



Case Study: Proactive Messaging

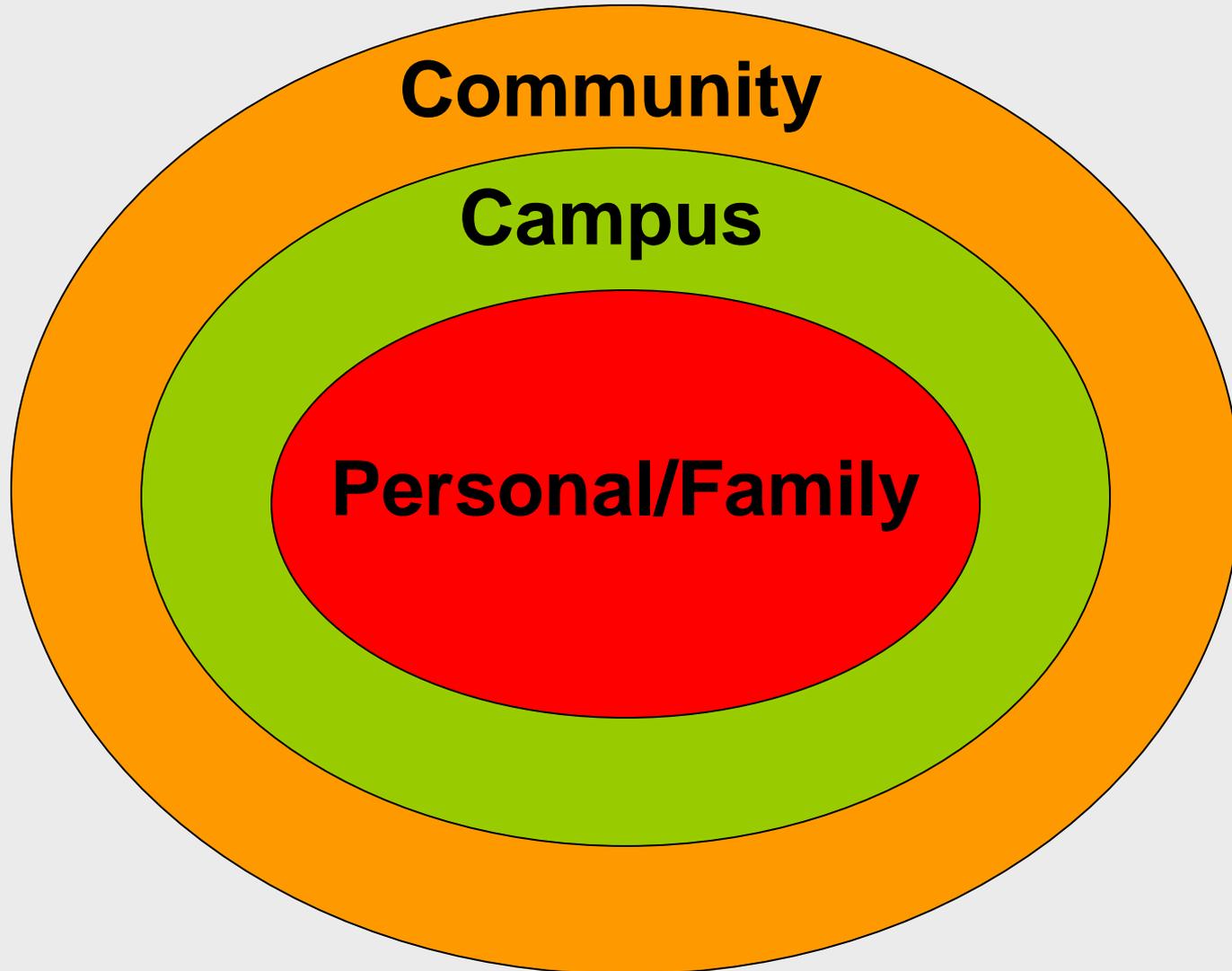
- How bad was this cruise ship fire?
- Lessons learned by Carnival Cruise Line
- SS Ecstasy ≠ SS Titanic?



Using Social Media In University Recovery



Scope of Recovery



Phases Within a Phase: How Recovery Develops

➤ Personal/ Family

- Assessing how the incident has impacted the student and their family
- Caring for the injured, grieving the loss of family members, assessing physical property losses, and re-establishing the physical residence

➤ Campus

- Reconnecting with classmates, finding out how soon university allows re-entry, coordinating clean up efforts, and restoring normalcy

➤ Community/Regional

- Restoring normalcy on a broad scale including repair/improvement of infrastructure, restoring public safety and health capabilities, economic engine restored
- Impact of local/state/tribal government's decisions that impact the campus/ students
 - EX: Xavier University Post Katrina

Social Media Applications in Recovery

BLOG	Campus and student life planning, mental health outlet, release of recovery plans, airing grievances
PODCAST/ VODCAST	University recovery plans, announcements, media feeds for wider distribution, instructions on rebuilding
RSS FEEDS	Alerts to students, parents, faculty, staff, and alumni about campus status, residence hall openings, resumption of class, track progress of recovery, links to recovery programs, registration information, discontinuation of classes
SOCIAL BOOKMARKING	Information sharing that can include student safety warnings, recovery information sites, research
SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES	Campus/ community based recovery plans, clean up days, student reunification
WEBSITES	Find carpools for returning to area, posting of temporary relocation sites, family reunification, financial recovery planning, requests for documentation
WIDGETS	Applications independent developed for a specific function that that may include posting of temporary relocation site, family reunification, faculty-student interface.
WIKIs	Online community that allows for sharing of event specific information that may include status/ progress of recovery, instructional information pertaining to changes in university policy or procedures affecting students, parents, faculty or staff

Questions and Discussion

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