# Refreshing engagement with the attributes and concepts of best practice issues management

Asia Issues Management and Crisis Communications
Academy
Day 1, Session II
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# What is an issue?

- A disagreement over facts, values or policies

- A disagreement over procedural or substantive matters related to the distribution of resources or positions

- "A controversial inconsistency in expectations between stakeholders about their perception of corporate performance and what it should be, and actual performance, that imply or anticipate a resolution, that would have a significant, identifiable present or future impact on the organisation". (Professor John Mahon)

- An 'issue' is not a crisis - but can develop into one depending how it is managed.

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# What is issues management?

"Issues management practiced well is not defensive in orientation. It is a forward thinking offensive tool in the hands of management, to shape policy agendas, and to influence the rules under which a firm or industry operates".
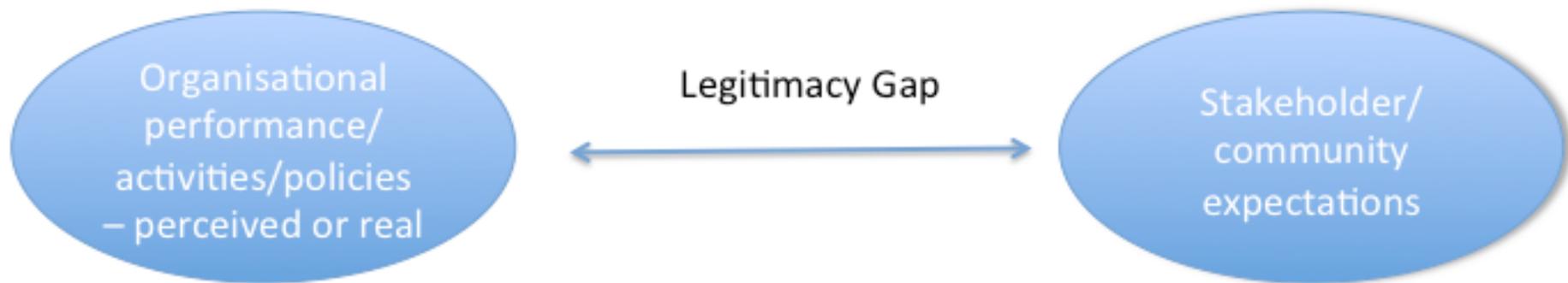
Professor John Mahon, University of Maine,
*Past President, Issues Management Council*
*Research Associate Centre for Corporate Public Affairs*

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# Issues management is not ...

- One-way control of a public issue.

- Spin or damage control.

- Defensive delay and deflection activities to crush opponents.

- Reactive fire-fighting in a crisis mode.

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# The manner in which an organisation manages issues can also affect its legitimacy gap



Organisational performance/ activities/policies – perceived or real

Legitimacy Gap

Stakeholder/ community expectations

Gap closers: Organisational behaviour, actions, public affairs strategy and tools

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# Issues Management process

1. Identification

2. Analysis

3. Priority Setting

4. Active management

5. Evaluation

# Issues Life Cycle
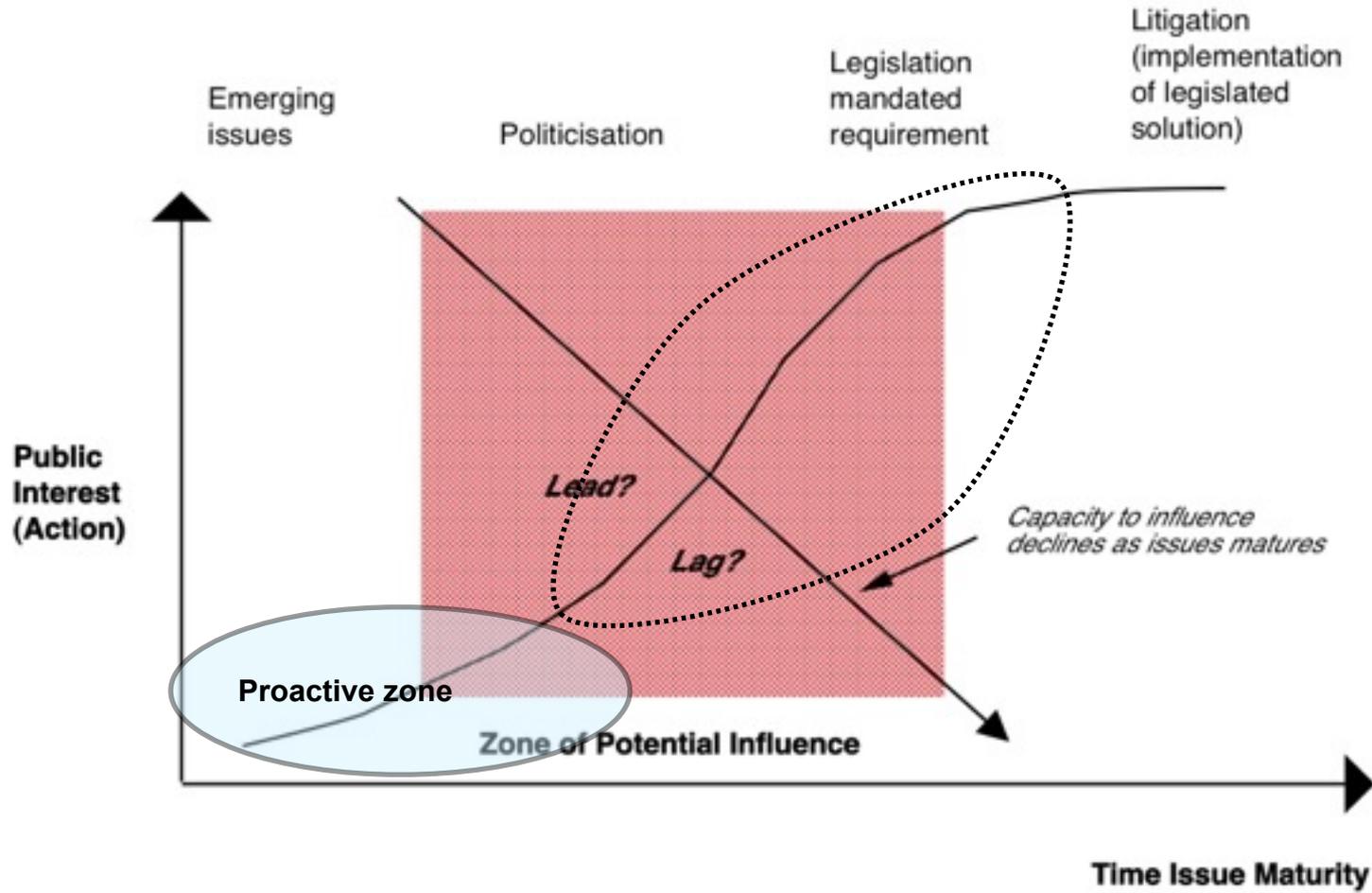


Source: Centre for Corporate Public Affairs, 2008

# Early identification maximises successful outcomes: four steps

**1.** Issues Framing.

- Naming - what is the issue called

- Claiming - who, what, when, how?

- Blaming - who is responsible?

2. Timing.

3. Arena choice and arena shopping.

4. Strategic positioning (tone, style, values-alignment).

# Issues framing examples

# Issues framing examples

# Issues framing - Greenpeace

# Timing can be everything

- Maximum impact v. minimum impact.

- Can define what stakeholders become involved.

- In a proactive posture, choice of long or short issues cycle.

- Want to be noticed - create a disturbance.



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# The way issues are managed can have a material reputational impact

# The way in which issues are managed can have a material impact on business materiality

# Issues framing  - BP oil spill

- What was the major issue for BP re: the Gulf of Mexico oil spill?

- What was the issue for stakeholders?

- Two strategies for issue management?

- What should have BP have done?  What would have been involved internally to make it happen?

# Issues management has become more complex because of how social media is used

# Is it only an issue if someone knows about it?

# What are the issues management priorities in your discipline area?

- What is your issues management strategy for your organisation?

- Strategy dictates NOT what to manage, as well as what to manage.

- Who is accountable for the issue - in most cases, it is not Corporate Public Affairs?

- What is your role? What is expected?

# Issues management is not brain surgery