

# **Factors to Consider While Attempting Image Restoration: Limitations to the Impact of Sound Strategy Application**

**Charles Wayne Bass  
Idaho State University**

**John Gribas  
Idaho State University**

*William Benoit has been the leading scholar in image restoration. Case studies based on his work give insight into effective and ineffective use of image restoration strategies. However, various factors appear to limit the success of attempts to restore individual or organizational image after it has been damaged through an untoward act, even when sound image restoration tactics are applied. Analysis of a situation involving former Ohio State University football coach, Jim Tressel, offers insight into why it is possible to apply proper strategy, as outlined by Benoit, and still fail in one's attempts to restore image.*

*Keywords: image restoration, crisis management, Jim Tressel, outside factors*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This analysis focuses on the image restoration struggle of Jim Tressel. Tressel served as the head football coach at Ohio State University from 2001 to 2011. During his time at OSU, Tressel won a national championship, increased the graduation rate among his student athletes, and developed a reputation of doing things the right way. But one untoward act virtually erased a lifetime of honest, hard work. This analysis focuses on the steps he took to restore his image and examines why his image restoration efforts have been deemed a failure, despite the coach having used tactics consistent with principles of effective image restoration. Tressel's story shows that it is possible for individuals or organizations to do everything *right* and still miss the goal of restoring image.

This analysis begins with a look at image restoration as defined by the scholars of the day. Next it overviews the case of coach Tressel, focusing on how he applied sound image restoration strategy. Ultimately, the analysis explores why he failed and what can be learned from considering this unique case.

## **IMAGE RESTORATION**

People have a desire to portray a certain image of themselves that they wish for others to hold. People may want others to see them as the athletic type, as honest, as studious, or simply as a friendly person. It takes work to get others to embrace that desired image. Goffman (1959) explains, "We find that the individual may attempt to induce the audience to judge him and the situation in a particular way" (p. 21).

People are generally aware of how they are being perceived, and if they are being perceived by their audience in a manner that is not of their liking, then it is up to them to change their audience's perception. This process of changing an audience's negative perception is called image restoration. According to Benoit (1995), "When our image is threatened, we feel compelled to offer explanations, defenses, justifications, rationalizations, apologies, or excuses for our behavior" (p. 2). Holtzhausen (2010) adds to the argument for the importance of image restoration in our lives: "In today's society, the importance of image cannot be overstated. Therefore, when a reputation is threatened, individuals and organizations are motivated to present an image defense: explanations, justifications, rationalizations, apologies, or excuses for behavior" (p. 1).

Benoit and other scholars have shown many examples of those who have had their image tarnished and who, by applying image restoration tactics soundly, have been successful in restoring their image. Studies have also examined those who have not applied sound image restoration strategy, with almost universally negative results.

Scholarly research has not made a distinction between strategies used by individuals and those used by organizations. Therefore, examples of image restoration tactics used in both organizational and individual cases of those who had attempted to restore their image will be reviewed.

### **Principles of Sound Image Restoration**

No universal, prescriptive standards exist for determining how an individual or a company should utilize image restoration tactics, nor for how to predict their effectiveness. Overall *results* seem to be the criteria used to determine image restoration effectiveness. For example, if a corporation engages in image restoration efforts and, as a result, the target audience of the stakeholders decides not to withdraw investment and customers continue to purchase their product, then these outcomes would suggest their efforts were effective. But, if stakeholders pull their money and customers decide to boycott their product or services, then the company's image restoration efforts could be deemed a failure.

Unfortunately, such an approach is rather limited since effectiveness can only be considered in *hindsight*, leaving image management practitioners with little to no strategic guidance. Even though no established guidelines for effective image restoration exist, consideration of the case studies reviewed here do allow for the identification of four guiding principles of sound image restoration strategy. These four principles are (a) remaining true to the facts, (b) protecting the public, (c) not changing strategy over time, and (d) not relying on just one tactic.

#### *True to the Facts*

Those who engage in image restoration should not twist or hide the truth to best fit their current needs; instead, it would be in their best interest to be upfront with what has happened and with what is being done about it. The Dow Corning and Exxon Valdez case offer excellent examples of the negative consequences that are likely to arise when this principle is not followed. In response to a large tanker oil spill with tremendous environmental and financial consequences, Exxon attempted to shift the blame to a slow responding Coast Guard and to the state of Alaska for holding up Exxon's cleaning efforts (Mathews & Peterson, 1989). Later, when facts surfaced that proved that Exxon had not been true to the facts by their false claims against the Coast Guard and the state of Alaska, Exxon was left with little-to-no credibility (Benoit, 1995). Likewise, after having been accused of causing harm to patients from unsafe and defective breast implants, Dow Corning put an ad in a major newspaper stating that there had been no direct links found between the implants and the illnesses experienced by the women (LaPlant, 1999). This denial might have been a successful strategy for the company if that statement had been true. Shortly after, documents became public, revealing that Corning had declined to fully test their implants despite the urging of corporate scientists and that the company had withheld the conclusions of scientific studies. Both Exxon and Dow, because they chose to try to hide the facts, lost credibility and added to their image damage (LaPlant, 1999).

On the other hand, when restaurant chain Denny's experienced complaints that customers had been discriminated against simply because of the color of their skin, the company was successful at least in part

because they fully embraced the facts, unpleasant as they were. Denny's made commercials publicly acknowledging the facts and spoke openly to the media (Carlino, 1993). Chin et al. (1998) explained that, in effort to restore their image, Denny's created a commercial that featured CEO Jerome J. Richardson and several employees, each repeating different lines of Denny's pledge:

Everyone who comes to our restaurants deserves to be treated with respect, with dignity, with fairness. . . If there's a mix-up, we'll apologize, and we'll make it right. . . I am human, I will make mistakes, but please know they will never be intentional. I promise.  
(p. 185)

Likewise, when in 1982 cyanide-laced capsules were discovered in a number of Tylenol bottles in Chicago, the CEO of Johnson & Johnson went on *60 Minutes*, *The Donahue Show*, and other media outlets, letting the public know that they had nothing to hide and were working to get the problem fixed (Fink, 1986). In response to the crisis, Johnson & Johnson implemented their new safety packaging: a plastic seal over the lid and a foil seal covering the mouth of the bottle. Tylenol became the first product in the industry to use the new tamper resistant packaging (Berge, 1990). This new safety feature was a form of corrective action, and most scholars applauded the manner in which this image crisis was handled (Benoit, 1995).

Nothing later surfaced with the two companies that would indicate that they had lied or twisted the truth. It appears that this adherence to truth contributed to the success they enjoyed in turning the audience's perception, and to why they have received continued praise for their efforts from crisis management scholars.

#### *Protecting the Public*

According to DiSanza and Legge (2005), "If an organization does little to protect the public, the environment, and so forth, there is little that it can later do to restore its image" (p. 255). Johnson & Johnson and Denny's are both clear examples of organizational crisis responses that put high priority on protecting the public. Johnson & Johnson immediately removed the Tylenol product from store shelves and issued warning commercials advising the general public of the crisis and the recall (Berge, 1990). Denny's made great effort to ensure that everyone was aware of their renewed commitment for equal treatment to all of Denny's customers (Carlino, 1993). These immediate responses by Johnson & Johnson and by Denny's were self-initiated, came at significant cost, and clearly showed a priority for public welfare.

Dow Corning and Exxon failed in their image restoration efforts, partly since their responses indicated primary concern for protecting themselves and little-to-no concern for the public. These two companies are clear examples of how a "looking out for number one" mentality can damage an image in the long run. LaPlant (1999) makes the following observation of Dow Corning, but the same could be claimed of Exxon: "The lack of sympathy in the company statements did nothing to improve its image either. This only added to the public perception of the huge company against sick and frightened women" (p. 33).

#### *Consistency Over Time*

Keeping tactics consistent appears to be important when restoring one's image. It is important to recognize the difference between using multiple tactics, which is a good strategy principle, and changing tactics over time, which is not. Trying to utilize one tactic, finding out that it does not work or is no longer viable because of information becoming public, then tossing it aside and trying something else is clearly an ineffective approach for restoring one's image.

The Dow Corning and Exxon cases are excellent examples of the problems that come with changing strategy over time. Dow Corning had three phases of image restoration. The first two focused mainly on denial and minimization. Andsager and Powers (1999) point out that "Dow Corning placed a full-page ad in major newspapers which stated there was no link between implants and disease and filed bankruptcy"

(p. 552). The third stage dealt with expressing mortification with corrective action. This change, going from denial to saying “I’m sorry, let’s make everything better” indicates an contrary and opposing image restoration strategy, resulting in message confusion, suspicion, and the sense that the apology was not sincere but forced. Benoit and Brinson (1996) assessed the successfulness of Dow’s efforts with the following statement: “While the answer to this question varies depending upon the phase of the controversy, the overall answer must be a resounding no” (p. 38).

Exxon changed up their strategy on a few occasions while accounting for their untoward act of the massive oil spill in Alaska. In their opening statements, Exxon had *extolled the training and skills of its employees* on board the ship (Birkhead & Butler, 1986). Once a blood test revealed that the captain was intoxicated during the crash, Exxon changed from backing their employees to shifting the blame onto Captain Hazelwood. Benoit (1995) notes that “Exxon was responsible for hiring him and overseeing his work as captain” (p. 128). Once Exxon realized that making Captain Hazelwood a scapegoat would not work, since the company knew he had a drinking problem and that he probably should not have been in charge of the largest vessel in the fleet (Hunter, 1990), Exxon changed their focus once again to blaming the Coast Guard and the state of Alaska (Benoit, 1995). When that did not work, Exxon changed the strategy again to attempt to minimize the untoward act, which did not positively impact company image either (Benoit, 1995).

### *Not Relying on a Single Strategy*

These case studies suggest that a multi-strategy approach is needed to positively impact an audience’s perception. The Johnson & Johnson case study showed use of a combination of mortification (apologizing), compensation, and corrective action. The Denny’s case study illustrated examples of mortification, corrective action, and bolstering. Every situation is different, which makes it difficult to say that these specific combinations of tactics are the best ones to use in certain situations. Recent empirical research has provided some evidence suggesting that certain image repair strategies are generally effective in most situations while other strategies are generally ineffective in most situations (Gribas et al., 2018). Regardless, it is clear that a use of a variety of tactics does appear to be a commonality among successful image repair campaigns seen in case studies.

When image restoration attempts fail, it could be due to a lack of strategy variety. For example, referring to the Dow Corning, LaPlant (1999) suggested that the reason for the failure was due to a lack of “Public Relation efforts” (p. 33). Dow put an ad in the paper, but not much effort other than that was made to restore their image.

### **When Doing Things Right Goes Wrong**

This review has presented a few examples those who have applied sound and appropriate image strategies and have succeeded in positively altering an audience’s perceptions. It has also highlighted some image restoration flops, due largely to a lack of attention to principles such as remaining true to facts, protecting the public, using consistent strategy over time, and applying multiple strategies. But image management success must depend on more than simply applying correct principles; outside forces must be examined as playing a role in image management effectiveness. Doing the right things in image restoration may not be enough, and the outcome of image management may not always seem fair.

The following is a look at two more cases focused on two celebrities who shared the same clean-cut image. Each of these young role models had committed a very similar untoward act, and both attempted to restore the positive image they once enjoyed by applying image restoration strategies in reasonable and strategic ways. However, one was successful and the other struggled for many years and, some would argue, is still struggling.

### *Hugh Grant*

Benoit (1997) illustrates how actor Hugh Grant, who was known for his likeable, boyish image, portrayed in romantic comedies such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Nine Months*, and *Sense and*

*Sensibility*, “had in one day tarnished that boyhood innocent image when he was found cheating, and arrested for lewd public behavior with a prostitute” (p. 251). Benoit (1997) makes the following point:

Grant committed an offensive act. He admitted it, did not attempt to minimize its offensiveness (although denial, discussed next, limited the scope of the misbehavior he admitted), and did not try to make any excuses for his behavior. Thus, Grant's defense includes a classic example of mortification. (p. 257)

Grant offered a few more examples of mortification. “I feel I deserve to suffer a bit . . . I am humiliated, and I am particularly humiliated by having to do this” (Benoit, p. 257). Those statements give the appearance that he felt repentant of what he did, and that he felt he deserved the punishment of being embarrassed and arrested. Benoit observed that “a professed willingness to suffer may have led his audience to see his apology as genuine” (p. 257).

Denial is another image restoration method used by Grant. Grant did not deny the action that led to his arrest, but he did deny other charges from *Newsweek* that he often goes to topless bars. Benoit (1997) points out Grant's use of denial when he stated, “I don't frequent topless bars . . . my brother did take me once, ah, but that's the only time I've ever—I'm not an habitué” (p. 259). Benoit (1997) gives an example of attempt to minimize when Grant stated that he didn't “lose a job over the incident” (p. 257). Because denial and mortification are seemingly contradictory tactics, it would appear unwise to deny an untoward act and then express mortification. In Grant's case, this tactic of denial didn't diminish the mortification he expressed earlier because he was denying a different charge from the charge for which he showed mortification.

The final strategy that had been utilized by Grant is what Benoit (1995) refers to as attacking the accuser (p. 78). Attacking the accuser is seen when Grant proclaimed that “99% of what's in the papers and on TV is, is simply not true . . . British press have never been famous for their restraint.” Benoit (1997) points out other examples of attacking the accuser when he shows how Grant continued to attack the media for the treatment his family received. “I think it's fine to be a bit cruel about me, and in fact it feels sort of right to be suffering. But when they have a go at Elizabeth, who is a victim in this, or when they, ah, jostle my father, who's not very well, when on his way to hospital, it makes you hate them a lot” (p. 259).

Benoit (1997) explains why Hugh Grant's image restoration efforts were seen as effective. “People do not like to admit that they were wrong. This means that we often admire those who have the courage to accept the blame for their actions and “take their lumps.” It is not the offensive act that we admire, but their willingness to be forthright and confess their sins. We don't appreciate those who boast of wrongdoing, but when confession is coupled with remorse, it can gain the audience's good will” (p. 262).

Grant had accomplished his goal of obtaining good will with his audience through demonstrating mortification for what he had done. But it was not through mortification alone, as Benoit (1997) points out how Grant's use of denial was helpful in limiting the scope of the charges against him. “His use of mortification meant that he did not issue a blanket denial, and the fact that his denial was limited to certain accusations may have made it sound truthful. In fact, it seems likely that this particular denial would have been ineffective without using mortification” (p. 262).

Benoit (1995) explains that denial has occurred when “the accused denies that the offensive act actually occurred or denies that he or she performed it” (p. 75). Benoit also points out that “if the audience accepts the claim that an accusation is false, damage to the accused's reputation from that attack should be diminished, if not eradicated” (p. 3). Grant's use of attacking the accuser was applauded by Benoit (1997).

Attacking his accusers, especially a group not in his current audience (the British media), is likely to gain some sympathy for Grant. He portrayed them as callous. . . It was wise to express concern for how the media had adversely affected his family. . . Attacking one's accusers can be inconsistent with mortification, but in this case Grant wasn't attacking

the media in an attempt to dismiss the accusations against him, but in an attempt to gain sympathy for his family . . . In fact, attacking accusers probably would not have helped much if he hadn't used mortification. Nor did he attack in a shrill fashion, which might have undermined his defense. (p. 262)

It is apparent from Benoit's statements that the combination of image restoration tactics was what allowed Hugh Grant to be successful in restoring his image.

### *Tiger Woods*

Surprisingly little has been written on Tiger Woods' image restoration efforts in scholarly research. Even so, this section examines the efforts Wood's used because of the number of parallels between his and Hugh Grant's untoward acts, and how Woods and Grant applied similar image restoration strategies to attempt to win back the hearts of their audience. But, for some reason, Grant succeeded quickly in restoring his image and, for many years, Woods was still working on re-gaining the public's respect and his sponsorship's backing. According to Goldman (2011), "Tag Heuer downscaled Woods' presence in international ads and did not use him in any U.S. ads. Woods had already lost endorsements with Gatorade, Gillette, Accenture, AT&T, and Golf Digest" (para. 3). Bennet and Goldman (2011) explained:

Major brands love family-friendly images and they hate controversy. So when their heroic spokespeople get caught in something less than heroic, companies distance themselves as quickly as possible. Contracts are ended, ads are pulled, and the superstar finds out who their real friends are (Hint: It's not the marketing department). (para. 3)

In a press conference retrieved from a CNN internet video archive, Woods (2010) gave an account for his actions to repair his image. In Woods' account, he used mortification, just as it was used by Grant. Woods' press conference speech evidenced plenty of examples of mortification. Woods stated, "Every one of you have reason to be critical of me. I want to say to each of you, simply and directly. I am deeply sorry, for my irresponsible and selfish behavior, that I engaged in" (Woods, 2010).

Tiger Woods also used attacking the accuser in the same manner that Hugh Grant had utilized it. Recall the quote by Grant:

I think its fine to be a bit cruel about me, and in fact it feels sort of right to be suffering. But when they have a go at Elizabeth, who is a victim in this, or when they, ah, jostle my father, who's not very well, when on his way to the hospital, it makes you hate them a lot. (p. 259)

Notice how the following quote from Woods is closely related to Grant's in terms of attacking the accuser when Woods discusses the media as the accuser.

When our children were born, we only released photos so that the paparazzi would not chase them. However, my behavior doesn't make it right for the media to chase after my two and a half year old daughter to school and report the school's location. They staked out my wife, and they pursued my mom. Whatever my wrong doings, for the sake of my family, please leave my wife and kids alone. (Woods, 2010)

Woods and Grant both used a bit of denial. Grant asserted, "I don't frequent topless bars. . . my brother did take me once, ah, but that's the only time I've ever—I'm not an habitué" (Benoit, 1997 p. 259). Grant also stated that he didn't "lose a job over the incident" (Benoit, 1997, p. 257). Woods had mentioned and denied separate charges that had been brought up about him as well when he stated the following.

Some people have made up things that never happened. They say that I've used performance enhancing drugs. This is completely and utterly false. Some have written things about my family. Despite the damages that I have done, I still believe it is right to shield my family from the public spotlight. They did not do these things! I did! I have always tried to maintain a private space for my wife and children have been kept separate from my sponsors from my commercial endorsements. (Woods, 2010)

According to the *ESPN.com News Services* (December, 2009) website, the following statement had been issued shortly after news of Woods' untoward act had been made public. "Global consulting firm Accenture PLC has ended its relationship with Tiger Woods, marking the first major sponsor to cut ties altogether with the golfer since his alleged infidelities surfaced. . . Accenture said Sunday the golfer is no longer the right representative after the circumstances of the last two weeks" (para. 1).

According to Goldman (2011), as of August of 2011, Woods lost another sponsorship of Tag Heuer, a luxury watch line. The article also pointed out that "Woods had already lost endorsements with Gatorade, Gillette, Accenture, AT&T, and Golf Digest" (p. 1). As a result of his image being tarnished, the golfer has yet to regain the sponsor endorsements.

Both Grant and Woods appeared to follow the four principles of sound image restoration outlined earlier. Neither communicated anything that later proved not to be true to the facts. They both took responsibility for what they had been accused of, and nothing later emerged showing that they had been dishonest. They both attempted to protect the affected public by pointing out that their families did not deserve to be harassed by the media, and both celebrities also were apologetic in letting down their fans. Grant and Woods were consistent over time in their image restoration strategies without flip flopping to different tactics while disregarding previous ones. Both had relied on more than a single strategy for their image restoration; they used a combination of mortification, attacking the accuser, and denial (of other accusations).

Why did Tiger fail where Grant apparently succeeded? Following proper image restoration protocol may be necessary for success, but it is apparently not enough. To explore this issue more fully, it would be useful to examine further cases where sound strategy has been applied for image restoration, and yet it still fails. Jim Tressel provides such a case.

### **The Jim Tressel Case**

Jim Tressel was named head coach of the Ohio State University Buckeye football team in 2001, and, in his second year as head coach, Ohio State won the national championship for the first time in 34 years. During his tenure at Ohio State, Tressel accumulated 106 wins with only 22 losses, and during his 10-year service as Ohio State's head coach, Tressel led the Buckeyes to eight Bowl Championship Series games. Before Ohio State, Tressel spent 15 years as the head coach of Youngstown State where he won 135 games and lost 57. Tressel had also won Youngstown State four Division I-AA national championships. As of 2011, Tressel's overall career win-loss record as a head coach was 241 wins to 79 losses ("Jim Tressel tenders resignation," 2011).

According to an ESPN article, the Ohio State head coach before Tressel had been let go by the university because "the program lost direction, with several off-the-field problems" ("Jim Tressel tenders resignation," 2011, par. 35). Aside from his on-the-field accomplishments, Tressel had already built a reputation as a coach who contributes a great amount of effort to classroom success for his athletes, off-field player conduct, and as one who makes considerable contributions to the community.

After Tressel devoted five years as head coach at OSU, the school's Athletic Director, Gene Smith, stated, "60 of Ohio State's 103 players scored 3.0 or higher on their grade-point averages, the best result in 11 years. . . The overall team grade-point average for the quarter was 2.89" (Lowman, 2007, par. 62). John Bruno, a psychology professor and Ohio State's faculty athletics representative, made this statement just after troubled quarterback Troy Smith received his bachelor's degree: "You can't imagine how far Troy has come in five years. Troy deserves no small credit. Jim (Tressel) deserves significant credit, too"

(Lowman, 2007, par. 58). Former Ohio State linebacker and current Kent State linebacker coach, Marcus Freeman, shared his thoughts about his former coach.

I don't know all the details, but I know the impact Coach Tressel made on my life as a leader. He helped mold me into the man, the father and the husband that I am today. He taught me that life is more important than football. He preached being a great person and great citizen as much as a great player. It's disheartening. And it was disheartening to hear so many negative things being said about him. Because I know the person I thought Coach Tressel was. And the person I still do today. ("Players react to Jim Tressel leaving," 2011, para. 5)

Another one of Tressel's former football players, Bennie Wells, also shared his thoughts about his former coach.

Do they not understand that only society will suffer more not having a Jim Tressel around! He's more than a coach to a lot of guys! . . . A lot of the players that came through OSU are like myself and don't come from the ideal situation, and when you have a guy like Tress that steps in as a father, mentor, friend, and teacher! It only helps the maturation process from a boy to man! And that alone is worth more than winning any football games. ("Players react to Jim Tressel leaving," 2011, para. 11)

Coach Tressel clearly earned the respect of his colleagues and former players at Ohio State, and he earned similar respect from his coaching peers from around the nation. Urban Myers, who won national championships at the University of Florida and later at Ohio State, had the following to say concerning Jim Tressel: "Jim Tressel has been a respected friend and colleague for a long time. I wish Jim and his family the very best now and in the future" ("Jim Tressel tenders resignation," 2011, para. 29). In the same article, Nebraska's head coach, Bo Pelini, shared his thoughts on Tressel: "Jim Tressel is an outstanding football coach and a good man. I've followed and respected his career since his days at Youngstown State, and through his tremendous success at Ohio State the past decade" ("Jim Tressel tenders resignation," 2011, para. 30). Head coach at Oklahoma, Bob Stoops, said, "I love Jim Tressel. I think he's a fabulous guy. He's overall been a strong example for all coaches" ("Bob Stoops: Sooners well educated," 2011, para. 16).

However, the highly respected Tressel had his reputation seriously tarnished after one untoward act. Those who police untoward acts in college sports consist of a committee of individuals known as the Enforcement Staff. The Enforcement Staff had investigated Tressel's violation of the NCAA rules. According to a document released from the Enforcement Staff, the untoward act was committed when then Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel failed to report that he had knowledge of preferential treatment received by some of his student-athletes, including the starting quarterback, Terrelle Pryor ("Case No. M352," 2011).

The governing body of colligate athletics, known as the NCAA, has forbidden such actions of preferential treatment. Preferential treatment has been defined in the 2009-10 NCAA Division Manual as "benefits or services because of the individual's athletics reputation or skill or pay-back potential as a professional athlete, unless such treatment, benefits or services are specifically permitted under NCAA legislation" (p. 64). These rules regulating benefits or services outside of NCAA legislation have been created in an attempt to keep the student-athletes on an amateur status, and it helps to regulate universities to make sure that recruitment of players is fair and not dependent on which universities have the wealthiest alumni.

In December of 2010, just before Ohio State was invited to play in the prestigious 2011 BCS Sugar Bowl, Ohio State's All-American quarterback, Terrelle Pryor, and five other teammates had been caught selling game memorabilia in exchange for receiving perks or preferential treatment such as free tattoos from a local tattoo parlor owner who, at that the time, was under a federal investigation for drug



trafficking. Free tattoos from a local businessman for an autographed shirt may seem like simple player misdemeanor, but sports analyst Skip Bayless pointed out the following:

Think about the Pandora's Box here? If the NCAA doesn't close this loophole, you're allowing schools to promise recruits that they can provide a local hook up for cars, clothes, tattoos, or whatever it might be. And, in exchange we'll give you a jersey to give them... You can't let that happen! You have to stop it, monitor it, and penalize it. ("What should Tressel's punishment be?" 2011)

That is exactly what happened. The six football players were suspended for the first five games to kick off the 2011 season, and they had to donate to a charity of their choice the equivalent of what they had gained in order to remain in accord with NCAA bylaws.

The dust settled on this story, and the manner with which the Ohio State coaching staff and the university handled this situation appeared to be in textbook style, but suddenly news emerged that head coach Jim Tressel actually received this information about players receiving preferential treatment via e-mails back in April of 2010, just before the kick-off of the new season. Tressel did not mention it to Ohio State's compliance department or to his athletic director for more than nine months. NCAA bylaw violations such as these are supposed to be reported immediately, but Tressel didn't say a word until after the news broke out that his players were receiving these "perks" ("Case No. M352," 2011).

Tressel had signed an "NCAA disclosure form last September that he was unaware of any violations" ("Tressel to miss five games," 2011, para. 15). According to an article on ESPN.COM, "Tressel's contract, it stipulates that he must disclose any potential violations or face dismissal" ("Tressel to miss five games," 2011, para. 14). Tressel was aware of what was expected in case of player misconduct regarding NCAA rules, and he did not report the student athletes' activity.

## **ANALYSIS**

Jim Tressel made several public statements on sanctions that he believed would take place and reported on self-sanctions that he and Ohio State had already put into place due to the violation of the NCAA bylaws. Of the reports given to the public, Tressel gave one primary public speech accounting for his actions and why he did not report the preferential treatment before the season started. The points he made in his public addresses are consistent with statements he made to NCAA investigators and during enforcement staff interviews. Due to the similarity of statements found in the NCAA interviews and his account given to the public on March 8, 2011, the focus of this analysis will be Tressel's speech given to the public in early March of 2011 which lasted just under ten minutes. (Tressel's speech accounting for his actions can be found on Youtube.com under username Bigtentracker, uploaded March 9, 2011). This section outlines the use and execution of image restoration tactics by Tressel during his speech. Tressel accounts for his actions and why he did not report the players when he first learned of their NCAA transgressions before the 2010 season had started.

### **Denial**

Tressel never denied committing the untoward act. His choice to avoid denial as an option is important to understand because, as pointed out previously, people do not like to admit that they were wrong. This means that we often admire those who have the courage to accept the blame for their actions and "take their lumps." It is not the offensive act that we admire, but their willingness to be forthright and confess their sins. We don't appreciate those who boast of wrong-doing, but when confession is coupled with remorse, it can gain the audience's good will (Benoit, 1997, p. 262).

After a quick introduction, explaining why he brought notes up to the podium, the first point that Tressel addresses in his March 8 speech is that he is not going to deny the accusation of receiving e-mails from a reliable source, a local attorney directly involved with the federal case, and not report the information about the athletes' NCAA infraction. Tressel states, "Last spring practice, I received some e-

mails regarding an ongoing federal criminal drug-trafficking case, and in those e-mails—I think you might have those, I’m not sure—it was pretty graphically outlining some of the parties involved” (see Appendix, para. 2). By pointing out that he did receive the emails and that these emails had been graphically outlining the parties involved, he really leaves no room for denying that he knew about the situation.

Tressel further admits wrongdoing when he states, “And, adamantly, I probably did not give quite as much thought to the potential NCAA part of things as I read it” (see Appendix A, para. 2). Tressel continues, “I probably or definitely did not move forward this information to anyone” (see Appendix A, para. 3). By not denying that the untoward act took place, and by being ready to take his lumps, Tressel positions himself to gain the admiration of his audience.

### **Evading Responsibility**

Tressel devoted a portion of his response to evading responsibility. This section focuses on three evading responsibility strategies: scapegoating, defeasibility, and motives and intentions.

#### *Scapegoating*

Scapegoating emphasizes that an act in question is a justifiable response to someone else’s (the scapegoat’s) wrongful act. In Tressel’s case, the scapegoat was this federal drug trafficking case and the confidentiality that had been requested by the attorney who sent the e-mails. Not interfering with a federal case was the reason for Tressel’s untoward act of not mentioning the NCAA bylaw violation. In Tressel’s opening line, just after his introductions, he states, “Last spring practice, I received some e-mails regarding an ongoing federal criminal drug-trafficking case” (see Appendix, para. 2). Tressel makes his audience aware quickly that the e-mails were not about player misconduct but about a much larger and more serious issue of an ongoing federal criminal drug trafficking case as his scapegoat. Tressel added, “Also, in those e-mails, it was very emphatic the nature of a federal investigation and that there’d be confidentiality” (see Appendix, para. 3). Coach Tressel mentions the *confidentially component* or the *federal drug trafficking case* twelve times in his 9:29 speech.

#### *Defeasibility*

Defeasibility, another strategy for evading responsibility, is when the accused claims a lack of information, volition, or ability (Benoit, 1995, p. 76) to do otherwise and that, therefore, the accused should not be held fully responsible. Tressel attempted to utilize the defeasibility tactic when he stated the following:

As Gene mentioned, in the outset that an NCAA violation occurred on my part, I asked for a little advice as to how I should have taken this forward. I’ve learned that I probably needed to go to the top legal person council at the University and get some help as to how to handle criminal investigations, and how to handle confidentially, and perhaps gain the protection you might need within the process. So I have now learned that most certainly. (see Appendix, para. 4)

This quotation from Tressel implies that he, at the time, did not really know how to handle a situation such as this. Because he lacked the proper information, he had asked for a little advice, and he learned that he should have gone to the top legal person council at the university. This reflects a clear use of defeasibility, suggesting that he lacked information at the time.

#### *Motives and Intentions*

Tressel also evades responsibility by suggesting that his actions were based on good motives or intentions. Tressel was trying to serve the better good by worrying more about the success of a federal drug-trafficking case than about NCAA bylaws. Tressel stated, “And, adamantly, I probably did not give quite as much thought to the potential NCAA part of things as I read it” (see Appendix, para. 2). Tressel

also reminds his audience that “as time went on, in my mind what was most important was that we didn’t interfere with a federal investigation” (see Appendix, para. 3). Tressel also emphasized that, in the e-mails he received, it was very clear that, because of the federal investigation, confidentiality was essential. This emphasis was shown in Tressel’s speech when he stated, “In those e-mails it was very emphatic the nature of a federal investigation and that there’d be confidentiality . . . And, that confidentiality was critical” (see Appendix, para. 3).

Benoit (1995) explains that “people who do bad while trying to do good are usually not blamed as much as those who intend to do bad” (p. 77). In pursuit of this end, Tressel further illustrated his good motives and intentions by directing his target audience’s attention to his focus on the personal well-being of his young athletes. Tressel made this point when he stated the following:

We sit in homes, we talk about, most especially how we’re going to take care of these people, and we’re going to treat them like they are our own. And, adamantly, I probably did not give quite as much thought to the potential NCAA part of things as I read it. My focus was the well-being of the young people. (see Appendix, para. 3)

Tressel suggested good motives in attempting to present himself as a kind of father figure (e.g., “... we’re going to treat them like they are our own...”) to his athletes, and by presenting his actions as those of a responsible citizen of the United States attempting not to mess up a federal case, thereby offering at least some justification for his untoward act.

### **Reducing the Offensiveness**

Tressel made some efforts to reduce the perception of the offensiveness of his actions by attempting “to reduce the unfavorable feelings toward the actor by increasing the audience’s esteem for the actor or by decreasing their negative feelings about the act” (Benoit, 1995, p. 78). He did so by applying bolstering, minimization, differentiation, and compensation.

#### *Bolstering*

In Tressel’s image restoration efforts, there are numerous examples of bolstering. Tressel uses bolstering twenty-four times, during a nine-and-one-half minute speech. That is just under two-and-a-half bolstering comments per minute.

One example of bolstering is when Tressel states, “You know, it was obviously a tremendous concern to me” (see Appendix, para. 2), letting his audience know how important the student-athletes’ lives are to him. He further illustrates that priority when he speaks about some of the biggest losses he has experienced as a coach: “I’ve had a player murdered, I’ve had a player incarcerated, I’ve had a player taken into the drug culture, and lose his opportunity to a productive life. So, this was obviously tremendously concerning” (see Appendix, para. 2). Tressel bolsters in relating the first action he took once he received the e-mails.

As I thought about a plan of action, the most immediate thing that I did is ramp up tremendously the discussions we have ongoing about the importance of who we associate with, where you are, the company you keep, and so forth . . . We worked very hard to make it a teachable moment, and as time went on . . . obviously, it was my hope that our young people, whether they were current or former, wouldn’t be involved in something like that. (see Appendix, para. 3)

By explaining that he “ramped up tremendously his efforts” in teaching the importance of keeping good company, Tressel insinuates that, because the players are important to him, keeping good company was already important to him. Tressel further bolsters by expressing how they tried to turn this into a teachable moment for his players and how he hoped that none of his current or former players would

partake in something such as this. These are all supporting examples of bolstering his role as a father figure, and not as some win-hungry coach, but someone who serves others and not himself.

As previously mentioned, Tressel informed his audience that he had not given as much thought to the NCAA rules as he had to the fact that there was a federal case involved. Even so, Tressel reminds us that his thoughts were nobler than simply wanting to keep players on the field in order to win games when he stated, "My focus was the well-being of the young people" (see Appendix, para. 3). Tressel bolsters by emphasizing the service that his athletes provide to the community when he stated, "I get a lot of good e-mails that say they enjoy the job that our guys do, or their visit to a hospital . . ." (see Appendix, para. 2). Tressel continued his praise of his student athletes by stating, "I am pleased that the young people involved are safe, they are not involved in any criminal activity, they are all in college, and they are all going to graduate from Ohio State. To me that's what it's all about" (see Appendix, para. 5).

### *Attempts to Minimize and Differentiation*

Tressel's attempts to minimize, and his use of differentiation will be discussed together due to the similarity of these two tactics and the way they were integrated by Tressel. Differentiation is an attempt to make an untoward act seem "less bad" by comparing it to, or differentiating it from, another even worse possibility. As explained earlier, Tressel made it very clear that the e-mails sent to him were about a federal drug trafficking case, which his players were not a part of. Tressel made a clear differentiation, stating that his players were not involved in criminal activity but, instead, they were on track to graduate from college.

I am pleased that the young people involved are safe, they are not involved in any criminal activity, they are all in college, and they are all going to graduate from Ohio State. To me that's what it's all about (see Appendix, para. 5).

By making this differentiation between an NCAA rule violation and criminal activity, Tressel at the same time minimizes the offense, showing that things could have been much worse. For example, Tressel has had players who have been murdered, he has had a player incarcerated, even taken into the drug culture, and lost his opportunity to a productive life (see Appendix). But his players involved in this incident did none of that; they simply committed an error in relation to an NCAA rule.

### *Compensation*

Tressel also relies on compensation for image management. In the March 8 speech, Tressel himself does not address the sanctions. However, previously, athletic director Gene Smith had informed the same audience that Ohio State had placed the players on a five game suspension and that Tressel would receive a two game suspension. Tressel responded to the two game suspension, twelve days after his March 8 speech: "I request of the university that my sanctions now include five games so that the players and I can handle this adversity together" ("Jim Tressel to miss five games," 2011 para. 11).

This voluntary expansion of his penalty qualifies as compensation because Tressel is giving his coaching time in attempt to repay the demands of justice. Former NCAA coaches, including some forced to resign for similar reasons, might feel the original university penalty was too lenient and would likely be more satisfied with a self-induced five game, as opposed to only a two game, suspension. Benoit (1995) explains, "If the accuser accepts the proffered inducement, and if it has sufficient value, the negative affect from the undesirable act may be outweighed, restoring reputation" (p. 78).

### **Corrective Action**

There are two different forms of corrective action. The first is trying to restore things to the way they were before, and the second is making changes in order to prevent similar actions from occurring again (Benoit, 1995). Tressel attempts the second form, showing that he has sought to learn what he should have done and that he has learned from the experience, so that, next time, he will know how to handle the situation properly.

I asked for a little advice as to how I should have taken this forward. I've learned that I probably needed to go to the top legal person council at the University and get some help as to how to handle criminal investigations, and how to handle confidentially, and perhaps gain the protection you might need within the process. So I have now learned that most certainly. (see Appendix, para. 4)

By showing that he sought to learn what he should have done and that he has learned from the experience, Tressel implies that he would know how to handle the situation properly if it were to arise again.

### **Mortification**

According to Benoit (1995), sometimes “the accused may admit responsibility for the wrongful act and ask for forgiveness, engaging in mortification” (p. 79). During Tressel’s speech, he never apologizes for not reporting. However, he did show a hint mortification when he stated, “Obviously, I’m disappointed that this happened at all” (see Appendix, para. 5). Tressel continued by stating, “Obviously I plan to grow from this, and I’m sincerely saddened by the fact that I let people down, and didn’t do things as possibly as well as I could do” (see Appendix, para. 5). Tressel did not come out and say, “I’m sorry, please forgive me, I accept full responsibility.” Instead, he made statements that sounded like indirect mortification, statements such as, “I’m disappointed this happened, I plan to grow from this, I’m sad I let people down, I could have done better in handling this.” None of these statements explicitly take direct responsibility, but they give the appearance that he is repentant.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

This final section will discuss Tressel’s application of the principles of effective image restoration outlined earlier, the NCAA’s ultimate decision regarding Jim Tressel, and possible reasons why Tressel failed in obtaining his goals although his image restoration efforts appeared to be on target.

### **Tressel’s Application of Principles of Effective Image Restoration**

In Tressel’s attempt to restore his image, he applied a number of effective principles discussed previously. Examples drawn from his speech give sufficient support for the claim that Jim Tressel’s image restoration strategy was quite sound.

First, Jim Tressel was straightforward in presenting the facts of the case, and to date nothing has emerged illustrating that he twisted or stretched the truth. For example, Tressel attempted scapegoating to the confidentiality that had been requested of him about not interfering with a federal drug trafficking case. If news later arose that confidentiality had never been mentioned to Tressel, or if the federal case had nothing to do with players being suspended, then that could have hurt his credibility and possibly hurt his chances of gaining any of the trust of his target audience. However, no information ever emerged that challenged the truthfulness of Tressel’s response.

Second, Tressel appeared very concerned for at least three of the four most directly affected publics. The athletes were the first public he attempted to protect, the second was the university, and the third included those involved in the federal drug case. He did this when he spoke of how focused he was on protecting the well-being of the young people. Tressel stated, “I also felt as if I had upheld within the entire situation that confidentially that perhaps made it the safest situation for our young people” (see Appendix, para. 4). Tressel also had been protecting the university of Ohio State by letting his audience know that the university had nothing to do with the happenings. He did this when he talked about how he asked for advice, and learned that he should have gone to the top legal authority in the university. By stating this, Tressel separates himself and his actions from the university, and hopefully makes the distinction clear to the NCAA as well.

However, the NCAA was another public affected. Tressel’s response did not appear to indicate the same kind of concern. In fact, Tressel stated, “...and, adamantly, I probably did not give quite as much

thought to the potential NCAA part of things as I read it” (see Appendix, para. 2). Tressel seems to admit a lack of focus on NCAA issues. As the governing body of college athletics, the NCAA has a responsibility to ensure that everyone is playing by the rules and that the treatment of coaches, players, and universities are fair and equal.

In his account, Tressel stressed his concern mainly for the athletes. He did indicate that he would not likely make the same mistake again, but he did not seem to respond to the NCAA as an affected public directly. Still, Tressel was clear in expressing his overall concern for those impacted by his actions.

Third, Tressel’s applied tactics in a consistent way. He did not try a tactic out and change to another one if it received a negative response. Statements Tressel made to ESPN, to the enforcement staff, and during his March 8, 2011 speech showed consistency throughout his investigation. An example of Tressel’s consistency could be seen with the following quotation from Tressel’s enforcement staff interview transcript. In this interview Tressel discusses the e-mails notifying him of the situation, and here Tressel scapegoats the confidentiality that had been requested in Exhibit 2–4, (2011).

He talks about, Hey, this guy’s a drug dealer. This guy’s in really big trouble. This guy’s gonna go to prison. Stay away from him. You know? Take da, da, da. I will keep you posted as relevant information becomes available. Just keep our e-mails confidential. (p. 71)

Tressel reiterated the same message of confidentiality in his March 8 speech when he stated, “In those e-mails it was very emphatic the nature of a federal investigation and that there’d be confidentiality. The tenner as I read them, perhaps because of my emotion, was that it was serious. And, that confidentiality was critical” (see Appendix, 2011, para. 3). Twelve days following Tressel’s press conference, Tressel is quoted as stating the following: “I didn’t tell anyone because I felt bound by confidentiality, since the tattoo-parlor owner was the subject of a federal drug-trafficking investigation” (“Jim Tressel to miss five games,” 2011, para. 16).

Not all strategies utilized by Tressel can be addressed here in order to show consistency, but these examples demonstrate the consistent manner with his approach.

Finally, Tressel employed a variety of complementing strategies with a heavy focus on a combination of bolstering, scapegoating, and good motives and intentions. Through bolstering, he let his audience know how important his student-athletes’ personal well-being was to him. Reminding his audience of this helped in his other tactics of scapegoating and good motives and intentions, both of which in return helped make the tactic of bolstering more believable for his audience. In scapegoating, Tressel’s reminded his audience time and time again of the drug case and the expectation of confidentiality that led to the untoward act. Tressel’s use of good motives and intentions helped tie together his other efforts of scapegoating and bolstering. When Tressel directed attention to the “higher values” of focusing on the personal well-being of his young athletes and not interfering with a federal drug case, he showed that he truly was concerned with more honorable things, as opposed to simply winning the next big game.

### **Why Tressel Failed**

The National Collegiate Athletic Association decided Tressel’s future in coaching college football, handing out the following punishment to Tressel, as reported by Rabinowitz (2011).

The coach (Tressel), who was forced to resign May 30 for NCAA violations, was given a five-year show-cause penalty. That means that, during the period, any college interested in hiring Tressel to coach must petition the NCAA and justify to its satisfaction why it should be allowed to employ him despite his past violations. (para. 2)

Despite having utilizing principles of sound image restoration, Jim Tressel appears to have lost this battle. But, why? Why was he unsuccessful in restoring his image sufficiently to retain his position, or even the ability to obtain employment coaching football at any university for the next five years? The

following will suggest reasons for why his efforts were unfruitful and why, sometimes, application of even the soundest image restoration principles can fail.

### **When Credibility Works Against You**

When an individual or an organization is perceived as being of the highest moral standards and then is caught in an immoral act, the reaction from the target audience could be more severe and the target audience's ability to forgive and move on could be more difficult than if that same individual or organization were not so highly regarded. Similarly, if an individual has built a high reputation, but among a social group with a perceived low moral standard, we might still expect less from them. If someone is associated with a group of liars, and then if that person is caught in a lie, it would not be that big of a shock, because that behavior would be expected due to the social group association.

This dynamic could have been one of the factors that helped Hugh Grant but worked against Tiger Woods. Grant is immersed in the glamorous but often seedy world of Hollywood, and people are accustomed to hearing about untoward acts. Grant may be considered a good guy, but only within a morally shady social group. On the other hand, Tiger Woods emerged as a leader in the gentlemen's sport of golf, and professional golf, unlike many other professional sports or Hollywood, has not had many scandals emerge. Therefore, golfers likely are held to a higher standard, which could make forgiveness more difficult than it might be for a movie star.

It has already been established in this review that Tressel not only built and enjoyed the reputation of being a successful football coach, but he also developed a strong sense of ethos or credibility as being a *good person*. Tressel also represents NCAA football coaches, who are held to a high level of expectations by following the strict NCAA bylaws.

The Ohio State University could be considered another social group that maintains credibility that leads to a high level of expectations, which adds to Tressel's positive ethos. As stated earlier, the Ohio State head coach before Tressel had been let go by the university because "the program lost direction, with several off-the-field problems" (par. 35). Apparently, off-field issues are not things that Ohio State tolerates. Also, Ohio State had been ranked third in ESPN's Prestige Rankings, a numerical method of ranking the most prestigious college football programs. Programs are ranked for certain successes such as number of regular season wins, conference championships, and national titles. Certain failures are also calculated into the equation, such as the number of season losses and violations leading a program to being banned from postseason games. The ESPN research department runs all the data through a computer to come up with the number one NCAA football program, all the way to the least prestigious program. Based on 73 seasons, the Ohio State football program had been ranked third (Fallica, Louks, & Shelton, 2009).

Jim Tressel enjoyed a personal image of being an honorable man who is also successful on the field, and he was associated with the high level of expectations that college football coaches are held to by the NCAA. Because of this image, combined with the reputation that Ohio State enjoys and wants to maintain, Jim Tressel faced a high bar of expectation, which left little room for committing errors. Apparently, the more credible they are prior to the untoward act, the harder it is to recover, even when applying sound image management principles.

More research is needed to explore if there is an overall trend showing that high credibility individuals and companies, as opposed to those who *enjoy* low expectations, have greater image restoration challenges. Such research could give insight into this as a possible factor that needs consideration for image restoration strategy.

### **When You Are Accused of Lying**

When the untoward act itself is that of dishonesty, anything that a person or an organization says in response may be questioned, because it has already been established that they have been dishonest in the past. For example, when a child is caught in a lie and tells his parents that he or she is sorry, the parent cannot help but wonder if the child is really sorry for lying, or if he or she is only sorry because of being

caught. The deception associated with the untoward act is likely to cast a negative frame on even the most honorable response.

Jim Tressel had been accused of lying by not reporting that he had knowledge of any player misconduct, when he did know that a few of his players should be suspended at the start of the season for receiving these perks. So, if he lied for whatever reason to the NCAA in the past, his target audience might wonder if his accounting for his actions was also a deception. Clearly, Tressel's initial description worked against his attempts to regain the NCAA's trust, as well as the trust of numerous other audiences.

Future research could be conducted to determine what percentage of successful image restoration case studies deal with those accused of lying, and compare that to the amount of unsuccessful case studies where lying is involved, to more fully explore the impact of a deceptive untoward act on overall image restoration effectiveness.

### **When Image Restoration Meets Image Maintenance**

A target audience of image restoration attempts may itself be maintaining a required image that prevents a favorable response. For example, Tiger Wood's sponsors need a spokesperson who will maintain a family friendly image. If a spokesperson is no longer viewed as family friendly, then the sponsors cannot risk themselves losing that family friendly image either, so ties must be cut between for the sponsor to maintain their desired image. If that audience is not sure of the response by some of their own vital audiences, then image management needs may surpass the impact of even the soundest image restoration.

Tressel was placed in a situation where he was expected to follow precisely the NCAA rules and to observe strict obedience to the laws of the land. This meant that he had to make a decision that would mean honoring one and disregarding the other. As previously mentioned, Tressel chose to honor what he saw as the laws of the land over the bylaws and regulations of the NCAA. Despite the NCAA's historic respect for Tressel, and even if they fully believed Tressel's defense, if they were to make a special exception for just one person, then their image could be damaged, and they might be expected to give special consideration in all cases. The NCAA would have to account for previous instances where coaches and universities had been penalized and would need to justify why these did not receive "special consideration." The NCAA had its own image to maintain, and this appears to have limited the degree to which even sound image restoration by Tressel could be effective.

### **CONCLUSION**

The case involving Jim Tressel shows that, even when one has a strong defense built on solid principles of image restoration, there are still outside factors that can keep one from obtaining the goal of turning an audience's perception. Sometimes, doing all the right things just will not be enough. It seems reasonable to consider the factors discussed above while in the planning stages of preparing for image restoration. At the same time, there needs to be more research conducted on these and other possible factors that could inherently limit success in image restoration.

### **REFERENCES**

- Accenture cuts Woods as Sponsor*. (2009, December 14). Retrieved October 10, 2012, from <http://sports.espn.com/golf/news/story?id=4739219>
- Andsager, J., & Powers, J. L. (1999). How newspapers framed breast implants in the 1990s. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 76(3), 551-564.
- Bennett, D., & Goldman, L. (2011, August 8). 12 athlete endorsements that were lost to scandal. *Business Insider*.
- Benoit, W. (1995). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. Albany: SUNY Press.



- Benoit, W. (1997). Hugh Grant's image restoration discourse: An actor apologizes. *Communication Quarterly*, 45, 251–267.
- Benoit, W., & Brinson, S. (1996). Dow Corning's image repair strategies in the breast implant crisis. *Communication Quarterly*, 44, 29–41.
- Berge, T. (1990). *The first 24-hours*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- Bigtentracker. (2011, March 8). *Tressel suspended two games for violation*. [Video file]. Retrieved October 30, 2012, from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-1Ae\\_NPp\\_Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-1Ae_NPp_Y)
- Birkhead, D., & Butler, J. (1986). Keeping flexible in the PR skirmish and how Exxon didn't. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 31, 20–21.
- Bob Stoops: Sooners 'well educated'*. (2011 June 6). Retrieved August 12, 2012, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=6628582>
- Bradley, R. (2011, July 3). *9Dec77 - The Forum; Inglewood, CA Houston Rockets vs. Los Angeles Lakers*. Message posted to <http://apbrbasketball.blogspot.com/>
- Carlino, B. (1993). Denny's TV ad rolls out welcome mat for all races. *Nation's Restaurant News*, 22, 12.
- Case No. M352*. (2011, July 21). Retrieved January 28, 2012, from [http://www.osu.edu/news/ncaadocs/pdf/case\\_summary.pdf](http://www.osu.edu/news/ncaadocs/pdf/case_summary.pdf)
- Chin, T., Naidu, S., Ringel, J., & Snipes, W. (1998). Denny's: Communication amidst a discrimination case. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 61, 180–197.
- DiSanza, J. R., & Legge, N. J. (2012). *Business and professional communication: Plans, processes, and performance* (5th ed.). Glenview, IL: Pearson.
- Exhibit 2-4*. (2011, February 8). Retrieved March 20, 2012, from [http://www.osu.edu/ncaadocs/pdf/exhibit2\\_4.pdf](http://www.osu.edu/ncaadocs/pdf/exhibit2_4.pdf)
- Fallica, C., Loucks, N., & Shelton, H. (2009, January 23). *Prestige ranking: Nos. 1-5*. Retrieved March 12, 2013, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=3849468>
- Faye, R., & Faircloth, A. (1996, May 13). *Denny's changes its spots not so long ago, the restaurant chain was one of America's most racist companies. Today it is a model of multicultural sensitivity. Here is the inside story of Denny's about-face*. Retrieved August 12, 2012, from [http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune\\_archive/1996/05/13/212386/index.htm](http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/1996/05/13/212386/index.htm)
- Fink, S. (1986). *Crisis management: Planning for the inevitable*. New York: American Management Association.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company.
- Goldman, L. (2011, August 8). *Tiger Woods loses another sponsor*. Retrieved October 12, 2012, from <http://www.businessinsider.com/tiger-woods-lost-sponsor-2011-8>
- Gribas, J., Disanza, J., & Legge, N., Hartman, K. L. (2018). Organizational image repair tactics and crisis type: Implications for crisis response strategy effectiveness. *International Journal of Crisis & Risk Communication*, 1, 225-252.
- Hunter, D. (1990, January 29). Alcohol stains record of skilled sea captain. *Anchorage Daily News*, A1.
- Jackson, A. (1990). Here in the Real World [A. Jackson]. On *Anthology* [CD]. Nashville: Artista Records. (1990)
- Jim Tressel tenders resignation*. (2011, May 31). Retrieved August 12, 2012, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=6606999>
- Jim Tressel to miss five games*. (2011, March 20). Retrieved November 8, 2012, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=6230308>
- Kirkpatrick, C. (1978, January 2). *Shattered and shaken*. Retrieved November 23, 2012, from <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/features/flashback/cuw/washington/>
- LaPlant, K. (1999). The Dow Corning crisis: A benchmark. *Public Relations Quarterly*, 44(2), 32–33.
- Longman, J. (2007, January 3). Two sides of Jim Tressel. *New York Times*. Retrieved December 12, 2012, from [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/03/sports/ncaafootball/03tressel.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1&](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/03/sports/ncaafootball/03tressel.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&)

- Mathews, J., & Peterson, C. (1989, March 31). Oil tanker captain fired after failing alcohol test; Exxon blames government for cleanup delay. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved November 23, 2012, from <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-1182693.html>
- Ohio State football players sanctioned*. (2010, December 26). Retrieved November 8, 2012, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=5950873>
- Players react to Jim Tressel leaving*. (2011, May 30). Retrieved October 10, 2012, from <http://sports.espn.go.com/ncf/news/story?id=6607211>
- Rabinowitz, B. (2011, December 21). *Ohio State football: NCAA smacks Tressel with five-year penalty*. Retrieved December 12, 2012, from <http://buckeyextra.dispatch.com/content/stories/2011/12/21/ncaa-smacks-tressel-with-5-year-penalty.html>
- Richard M. Nixon: Checkers*. (n.d.). Retrieved November 23, 2012, from <http://www.Americanrhetoric.com/speeches/richardnixoncheckers.html>
- 2009-10 NCAA Division Manual*. (2009, August 1). Retrieved February 12, 2013, from <http://www.ncaapublications.com/productdownloads/D110.pdf>
- Van Vliet, J. (2002, January 27). Clutch fans. *The Sacramento Bee*, C1.
- What should Tressel's punishment be?* (2011, March 8). [Video file]. Retrieved November 8, 2012, from [http://espn.go.com/blog/bigten/post/\\_id/24300/video-what-should-tressels-punishment-be](http://espn.go.com/blog/bigten/post/_id/24300/video-what-should-tressels-punishment-be)
- Woods, T. (2010, February 19). Tiger Woods' full apology [Video file]. Retrieved November 12, 2012, from <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/sports/2010/02/19/sot.tiger.woods.statement.cnn>

## APPENDIX

### An Account from Jim Tressel

Sports guys will know I normally don't bring notes up, they also know that I can occasionally talk in circles. This in my mind of the sensitivity of an NCAA investigation and the importance of it, warrants the fact that I need to be very accurate, very succinct, and on point.

Last spring practice, I received some e-mails regarding an ongoing federal criminal drug-trafficking case, and in those e-mails—I think you might have those, I'm not sure—it was pretty graphically outlining some of the parties involved. You know, it was obviously a tremendous concern to me. We get lots of e-mails, we try to respond to them all. Most of them someone is interested in something. Perhaps something that we can do or share or whatever, this one was obviously different. It enlisted obviously a different emotion you typically get than from someone who needs a hospital call, or a visit, or a letter, or something. And, it kind of jogged in my mind some of the toughest losses I've had in coaching. So, I get a lot of good e-mails that say they enjoy the job that our guys do, or their visit to a hospital, or sometimes we even get them from a Professor who is not happy with their behavior in class or whatever it happens to be. But, this one, as these e-mails began was much different than that. And, I've had a player murdered, I've had a player incarcerated, I've had a player taken into the drug culture, and lose his opportunity to a productive life. So, this was obviously tremendously concerning, quite honestly, I was scared. Especially the fact that two of our players were mentioned in the e-mails. And, umm... we sit in homes, we talk about, most especially how we're going to take care of these people, and we're going to treat them like they are our own. And, adamantly, I probably did not give quite as much thought to the potential NCAA part of things as I read it. My focus was the well-being of the young people.

Also, in those e-mails, it was very emphatic the nature of a federal investigation and that there'd be confidentiality. The tenner as I read them, perhaps because of my emotion, was that it was serious. And, that confidentiality was critical. As I thought about a plan of action, the most immediate thing that I did is ramp up tremendously the discussions we have ongoing about the importance of who we associate with, where you are, the company you keep, and so forth. And, I probably or definitely did not move forward this information to anyone simply because in my mind I could not think who that best would be. With the seriousness of what was discussed in the e-mails and also the confidentiality component. We worked very hard to make it a teachable moment, and as time went on, in my mind what was most important was that

we didn't interfere with a federal investigation. Obviously, it was my hope that our young people, whether they were current or former, wouldn't be involved in something like that. But obviously I didn't know, and that I needed to keep site of the fact that confidentially was requested by the attorney.

And, so I followed that. When December came and we were given information from the US Attorney General's office that six of our current student athletes were involved. Obviously, that was disappointing, it was encouraging though that no one was involved in any drug trafficking situation, and there were no criminal act of any kind. That was a huge relief. I knew obviously in that point in time that we would have NCAA ramifications and we would deal with that immediately, which we did. And, I also felt as if I had upheld within the entire situation that confidentially that perhaps made it the safest situation for our young people. So, as I think back as to what I could have done differently, because as Gene mentioned, in the outset that an NCAA violation occurred on my part, I asked for a little advice as to how I should have taken this forward. I've learned that I probably needed to go to the top legal person council at the University and get some help as to how to handle criminal investigations, and how to handle confidentially, and perhaps gain the protection you might need within the process. So, I have now learned that most certainly.

Obviously, I'm disappointed that this happened at all. I take my responsibility for what we do at Ohio State tremendously serious. And the game of football. And, obviously I plan to grow from this, and I'm sincerely saddened by the fact that I let people down, and didn't do things as possibly as well as I could do. I am pleased that the young people involved are safe, they are not involved in any criminal activity, they are all in college, and they are all going to graduate from Ohio State. To me that's what it's all about. But, I understand that we will all have sanctions, I will have sanctions, but the only thing that I've talked to our team about which I mentioned to them this morning because there was discussion in the media last night that I was certain that some or all had seen. I mentioned to them a quote that I heard George Bush say: "The most pathetic thing is a leader who's looking for self-pity." So, at no point in time at this moment, or in the moments ahead with my team, or with anyone else, am I looking for doing what needs to be done, growing from the experiences we've had, and continuing to serve the greatest University in America.