##### Professional Writing

##### Chapter Six Activities

1. Collect as many public relations documents as you can from two competing companies in the same industry and compare them. What similarities and differences can you find in writing strategy, style and layout? How does the company’s image (i.e. the desired way the company wants the public to see it) account for the differences? Can you see any differences between push and pull media?
2. Below is an abridged version of BP CEO Tony Hayward's speech on the oil spill accident in the Gulf Coast of the US in 2010. The speech was delivered by Hayward on 17 June 2010, addressing the congressional committee (the full speech text can be found at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/jun/17/bp-tony-hayward-oil-spill-statement>). Although this is a shortened version it retains the original organization and sequencing of information. Analyze the speech in relation to the concepts of speech writing and crisis communication discussed in this chapter. In what ways do you think the speech is effective and in what ways do you think it is not and could be improved?

The explosion and fire aboard the Deepwater Horizon and the resulting oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico never should have happened ─ and I am deeply sorry that they did. None of us yet knows why it happened. But whatever the cause, we at BP will do what we can to make certain that an incident like this does not happen again.  
  
Since April 20, I have spent a great deal of my time in the Gulf Coast region and in the incident command center in Houston, and let there be no mistake - I understand how serious this situation is. This is a tragedy: people lost their lives; others were injured; and the Gulf Coast environment and communities are suffering. This is unacceptable, I understand that, and let me be very clear: I fully grasp the terrible reality of the situation.

I want to acknowledge the questions that you and the public are rightly asking. How could this happen? How damaging is the spill to the environment? Why is it taking so long to stop the flow of oil and gas into the Gulf?  
  
And questions are being asked about energy policy more broadly: Can we as a society explore for oil and gas in safer and more reliable ways? What is the appropriate regulatory framework for the industry?  
  
We don't yet have answers to all these important questions. But I hear the concerns, fears, frustrations - and anger - being voiced across the country. I understand it, and I know that these sentiments will continue until the leak is stopped, and until we prove through our actions that we will do the right thing. Our actions will mean more than words, and we know that, in the end, we will be judged by the quality of our response. Until this happens, no words will be satisfying.  
**Among the resources that have been made available**:

* Drilling and technical experts who are helping determine solutions to stopping the spill and mitigating its impact, including specialists in the areas of subsea wells, environmental science and emergency response;
* Technical advice on blowout preventers, dispersant application, well construction and containment options;
* Additional facilities to serve as staging areas for equipment and responders, more remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) for deep underwater work, barges, support vessels and additional aircraft, as well as training and working space for the Unified Command.

Working under the umbrella of the Unified Command, BP's team of operational and technical experts is coordinating with many federal, state, and local governmental entities and private sector organizations. These include the Departments of Interior, Homeland Security, Energy, and Defense, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFW), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), EPA, OSHA, Gulf Coast state environmental and wildlife agencies, the Marine Spill Response Corporation (MSRC) (an oil spill response organization), as well as numerous state, city, parish and county agencies.

**Our efforts in response to this incident are focused on two critical goals**:

* Successfully stopping the flow of oil; and
* Minimizing the environmental and economic impacts from the oil spill.

These are without a doubt complex and challenging tasks. While we have had to overcome hurdles, we are doing everything we can to respond as quickly and effectively as we can.  
  
The investigation team's work thus far suggests that this accident was brought about by the apparent failure of a number of processes, systems and equipment. While the team's work is not done, it appears that there were multiple control mechanisms - procedures and equipment - in place that should have prevented this accident or reduced the impact of the spill. The investigation is focused on the following seven mechanisms:  
  
1. The cement that seals the reservoir from the well;  
2. The casing system, which seals the well bore;  
3. The pressure tests to confirm the well is sealed;  
4. The execution of procedures to detect and control hydrocarbons in the well, including the use of the blowout preventer (BOP) and the maintenance of that BOP;  
5. The BOP Emergency Disconnect System, which can be activated by pushing a button at multiple locations on the rig;  
6. The automatic closure of the BOP after its connection is lost with the rig;  
and;  
7. Features in the BOP to allow ROVs to close the BOP and thereby seal the well at the seabed after a blowout.  
  
I understand people want a simple answer about why this happened and who is to blame. The truth, however, is that this is a complex accident, caused by an unprecedented combination of failures. A number of companies are involved, including BP, and it is simply too early to understand the cause.