Burkenroad Symposium to explore turning crisis into opportunity

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From the Deepwater Horizon disaster to the subprime mortgage debacle to the chaotic aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, recent history is filled with examples of crises that pose daunting, multileveled challenges to the organizations involved, but those trying events can also present unique opportunities.



The 18th annual Burkenroad Symposium will explore organizational crisis and how businesses can turn adversity into competitive advantage.

For the 18th annual Burkenroad Symposium on Business and Society, “Honor in the Face of Fire: Turning Crisis into Opportunity,” a distinguished panel of scholars and business experts will explore the issue of organizational crisis and discuss ways in which forward-thinking companies can transform adversity into competitive advantage.

The symposium, an annual presentation of the Burkenroad Institute at Tulane University’s A. B. Freeman School of Business, will take place on Friday, Feb. 18, at 10 a.m. in the Kendall Cram Lecture Hall of the Lavin Bernick Center. The event is free and open to the public.

“Crises can result from negligence, chance or willful misdoing, but regardless of the cause, the critical issue is how organizations prepare for crisis and, more importantly, how they respond, both internally and externally,” says Adrienne

Colella, the James McFarland Distinguished Chair in Business and director of the Burkenroad Institute. “The speakers at this year’s Symposium on Business and Society will address the ethical, leadership and communication issues involved when organizations experience a crisis.”

This year’s presenters include three nationally recognized experts in the areas of ethical leadership and social responsibility, energy management, and crisis communications.

Gael O’Brien is founder and principal of Strategic Opportunities Group, a consulting firm specializing in ethical leadership, social responsibility and crisis management. A columnist for *Business Ethics* magazine and author of *The Week in Ethics*, an influential blog covering corporate ethics, O’Brien is co-author with Deepak Chopra and Jack Canfield of *Stepping Stones to Success*. In 1996, O’Brien was recruited by Mitsubishi Motor Manufacturing of America to help create a model workplace after the company was sued by the EEOC. She later served as vice president for corporate communications and public affairs with Mitsubishi Motors North America and as president of Mitsubishi Motors USA Foundation. O’Brien was also director of marketing at Price Waterhouse, chief of staff for a senate leader in the Ohio Senate and assistant editor at *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Anjali Sheffrin is a research professor at the Tulane Energy Institute specializing in market design for wholesale electricity markets, economics of renewables and regulatory policy. Sheffrin has 27 years of management experience in the electric utility industry, and as chief economist for the California Independent System Operator, she was the market monitor during the state’s energy crisis, where she led the effort to identify market manipulation and gaming in the wholesale electricity market.

Robert R. Ulmer is professor and chair of the Department of Speech Communication at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. An internationally recognized expert in risk and crisis communication, Ulmer was one of the first researchers to focus on finding positive results from a crisis, and his approach, called the discourse of renewal, is now used throughout the business and health industries as a way to communicate crisis-driven information effectively. Ulmer has co-authored five books and over 40 research articles on effective crisis communication. His most recent book, *Effective Crisis Communication: Moving from Crisis to Opportunity*, explores how effective crisis communications can be used to develop a meaningful dialog and

shared understanding with stakeholders.

The Burkenroad Institute was established in 1990 to increase the understanding of and promote, through research and education, the ethical decision making of business leaders. Through the annual Symposium on Business and Society, the institute's objective is to focus attention on the corporate social responsibilities of business leaders as well as to stimulate thought and discussion among students, faculty, executives and community leaders about some of the difficult issues that face today's leaders and managers. National experts in business, education, journalism and policy making participate in this annual conference.

For more information about this year's symposium, contact Christian Galvin at 504-862-8481 or cgalvin@tulane.edu.