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## Looking Ahead to the 2009 AGM It's Never Too Early

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# IRupdate

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# Looking Ahead to the 2009 AGM

## It's Never Too Early

BY ART SAMANSKY AND ERIC SAMANSKY

Oh, what an annual meeting season 2009 could be! Communications professionals should prepare **now** for those meetings in great detail — well beyond the usual. Here are nine communications issues for '09 that call for special attention in this harsh global economic environment.

1. Review all planned Annual General Meeting expenditures and cut the extravagances. Among things to consider: If the expense were the subject of a story in the media, would your company be embarrassed? If so, cut it.
2. Plan to hold the annual meeting in a place easily accessible to the bulk of shareholders. Investors are frustrated enough by various issues; don't add to their angst and expense by making them go significantly out of the way.
3. Plan for more than the usual number and size of "protests" than have occurred previously at your annual meeting or others in your industry. Many investors, frustrated, nervous, and in some cases, angry, may view the meeting as the place to vent. Be certain executives and staff who attend the meeting are fully briefed on security procedures.
4. Plan for more than the usual contingent of media, ranging from print to broadcast, and plan to accommodate their specialized needs.
5. Be certain every representative of your organization expected at the annual meeting — from the chairperson on down — and likely to be talking with reporters or analysts, is media-trained. In addition, be certain each is fully familiar with the company's guidelines about who is authorized to speak with reporters and analysts on specific subjects, and what information can be provided so as not to violate regulations or inadvertently reveal proprietary information. Even if the representatives previously have been media-trained, be sure that training is reasonably current, and provide a refresher session as necessary.
6. Role-play *aggressively* with the speakers and be sure not to wait for the last minute: verbal misunderstandings in this environment could be devastating.
7. Provide any needed training in presentation techniques for all representatives and back-ups who are likely to speak at the meeting.

You only have one chance to tell *your* corporate story.

8. Be certain executive briefing books are finished earlier than usual to allow more time for review.

9. Be certain the final corporate messages to be delivered are direct, accurate to a fault, and devoid of gloss.

No one knows what the world economy will look like by the time the 2009 annual meeting season begins in earnest, but many observers don't expect a quick turnaround from the current scene. Using the current environment as the likely backdrop for the 2009 annual meeting season is prudent no matter what conditions are at the time of your meeting. **IRU**



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**Art and Eric Samansky** are principals of The Samansky Group ([www.samanskygroup.com](http://www.samanskygroup.com)), a Long Island, NY corporate communications firm, specializing in critical communications disciplines, including media and presentation/speech training. The father and son team is currently writing an annual meeting primer focusing on corporate communications activities.