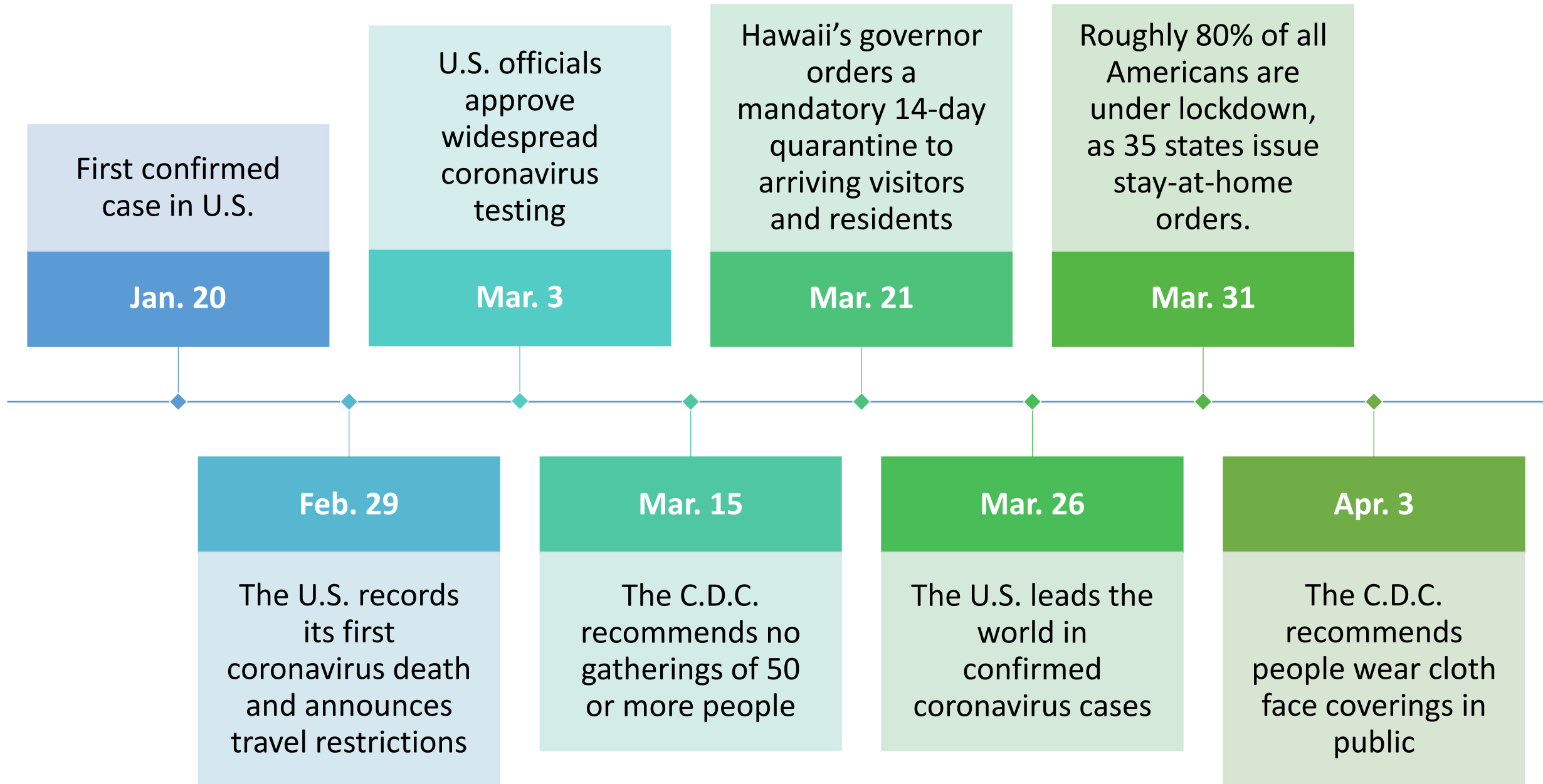


# Spread the Word, Not the Virus: Communication in the Time of COVID-19

Dr. Shaniece Criss, Furman University



# U.S. Timeline for COVID-19 (2020)



# S.C. Executive Orders for COVID-19 (2020)



- March 13: Declaring **State of Emergency** in Response to COVID-19
- March 15: **Closing Schools**, Other Provisions in Response to COVID-19
- March 21: Regulatory Flexibility to Facilitate **“Social Distancing”**
- March 23: Authorizing Law Enforcement to Preserve Public Health (**prohibits gatherings greater than 3 people**)
- March 27: **Self-Quarantine** for Individuals from High-Risk Areas
- March 30: Emergency Access **Restrictions for Public Beaches & Waters** Due to COVID-19 Pandemic
- March 31: **Closure** of Non-Essential Businesses
- April 3: Closure of **Additional** Non-Essential Businesses
- April 3: Lodging & Travel **Restrictions** for Individuals from High-Risk Areas
- April 6: **Home or Work Order**

**Due to high demand and to support all guests, we will be limiting the quantities of disinfectant wipes, hand sanitizer, hand & face wipes, toilet paper and 24-pk bottled water to 4 per guest.**

**We apologize for any inconvenience.**

A red boat with a green canopy is beached on a sandy shore. A large, dark anchor is prominently placed in the foreground, partially buried in the sand. The boat is secured with ropes. The background shows a clear blue sky and a rocky coastline.

# Anchoring Affects Decision Making

People tend to rely too heavily on the very first piece of information they learn.

# Four Ways People Process Information during a Crisis



By understanding how people take in information during a crisis state, we can better plan to communicate with them.

We simplify messages.	We hold on to current beliefs.	We look for additional information and opinions.	We believe the first message.
<b>Use simple messages.</b>	<b>Messages should come from a credible source.</b>	<b>Use consistent messages.</b>	<b>Release accurate messages as soon as possible.</b>



## Less clear

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**“Practice social distancing.”**

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- X New term**
- X Unclear**
- X Not specific**
- X Conceptual**



## More clear

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**“Stay at home.  
Get groceries  
once per week.”**

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- ✓ Use known words**
- ✓ Be clear**
- ✓ Be specific**
- ✓ Be concrete**









Image Source: Ari Saperstein for Laist | [https://laist.com/2020/03/19/your\\_no-panic\\_guide\\_am\\_i\\_doing\\_social\\_distancing\\_right.php](https://laist.com/2020/03/19/your_no-panic_guide_am_i_doing_social_distancing_right.php)

ARI SAPERSTEIN

# Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) Rhythm

## Engage Community • Empower Decision-Making • Evaluate

### Preparation

- Draft and test messages
- Develop partnerships
- Create plans
- Determine approval process

### Initial

- Express empathy
- Explain risks
- Promote action
- Describe response efforts

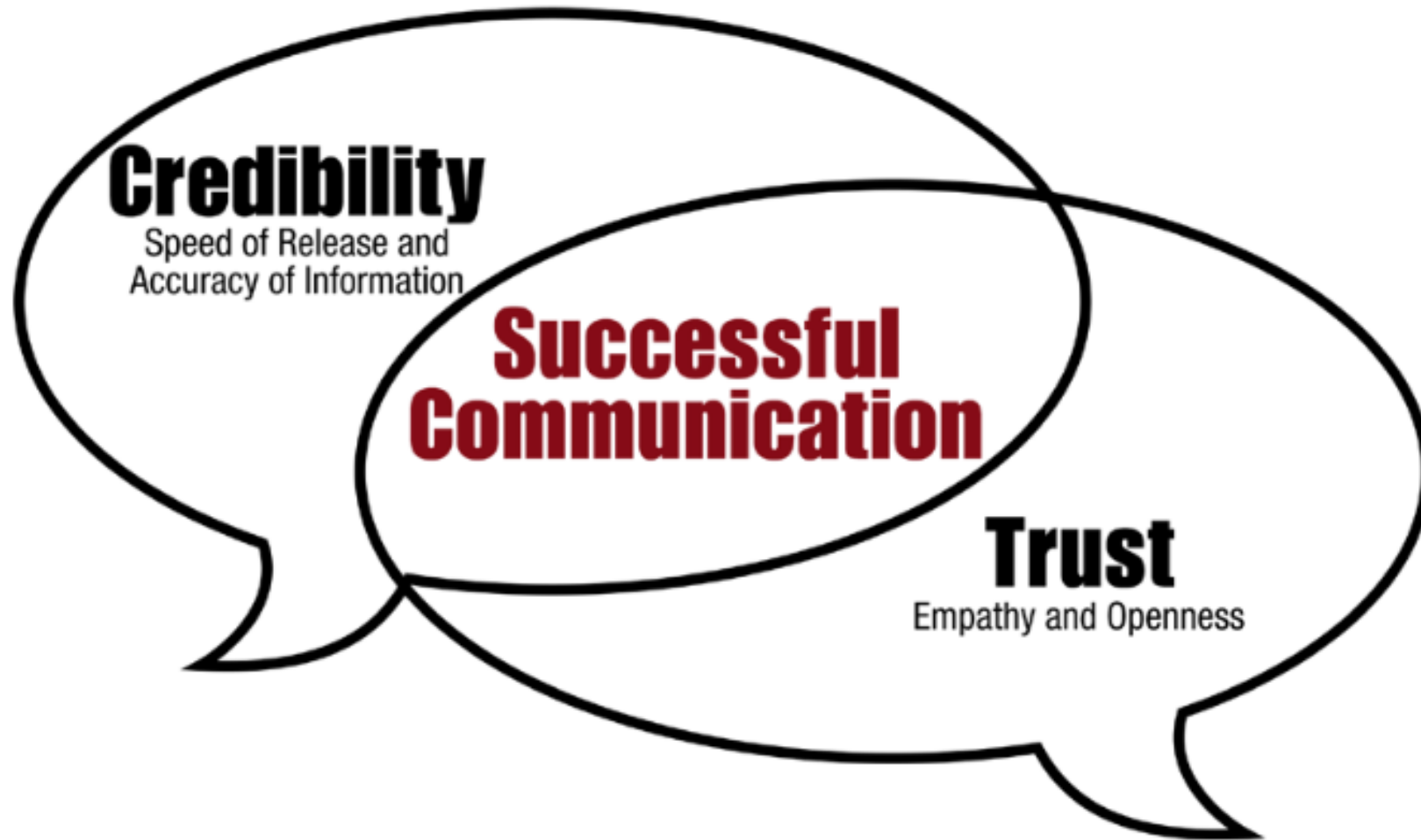
### Maintenance

- Explain ongoing risks
- Segment audiences
- Provide background information
- Address rumors

### Resolution

- Motivate vigilance
- Discuss lessons learned
- Revise plan

# Building Credibility and Trust



People receive, interpret, and evaluate messages before they decide to take action. Expect your audience to immediately judge the content of your message as well as the delivery. **Successful communication depends on credibility and trust.**

# Organizational Communication

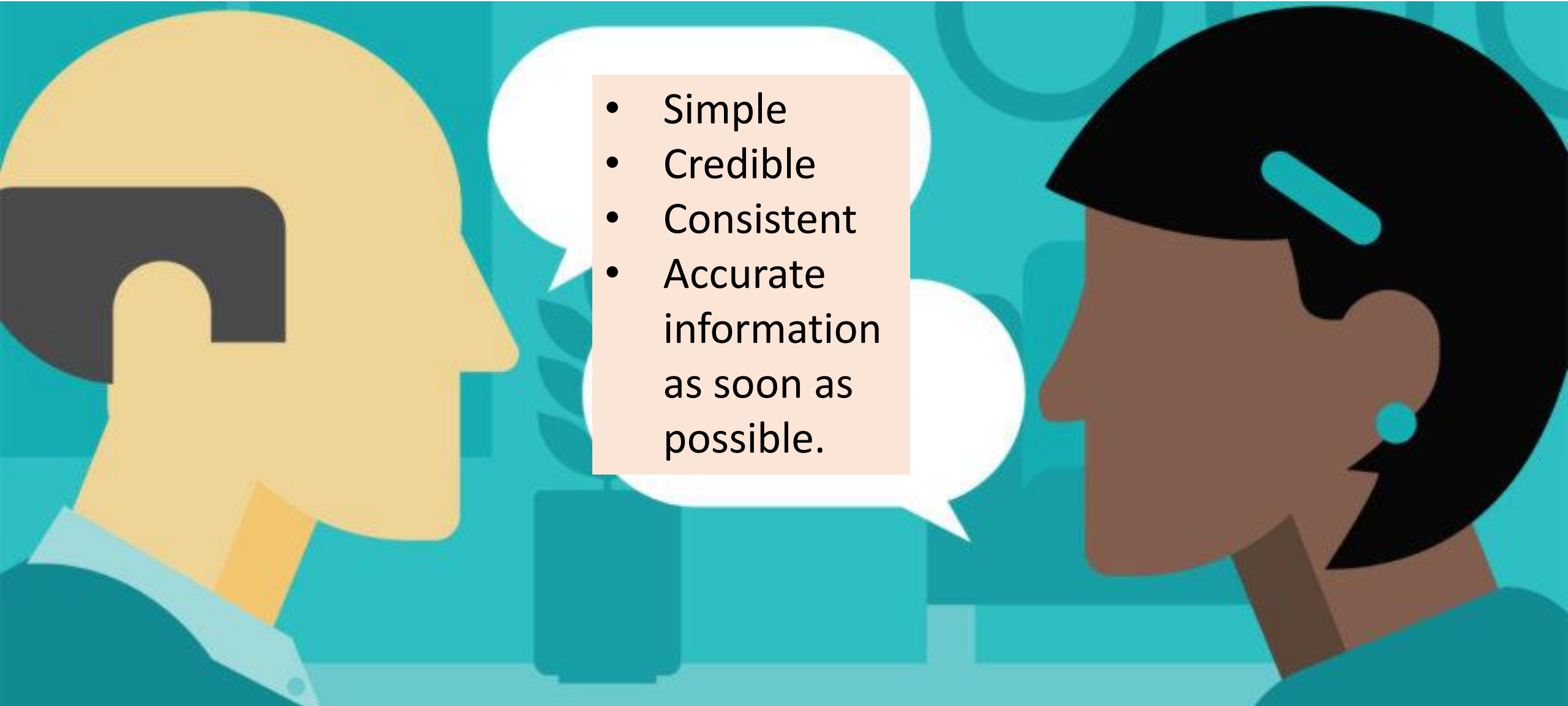
- **Step 1: Create a Team for Centralized Communication**
- **Step 2: Communicate with Employees**
- **Step 3: Communicate Regularly with Customers**
  - Focus on what is important to the customer.
  - Provide relief when possible.
  - Focus on empathy rather than trying to create selling opportunities.
- **Step 4: Reassure Shareholders**
- **Step 5: Be Proactive with Communities**



Image Source: <https://www.apowersoft.com/record-zoom-meeting.html>

# Spread the Word, Not the Virus: Communication in the Time of COVID-19

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- An illustration featuring two stylized human profiles in profile, facing each other. The profile on the left is light yellow with a dark grey shape on its forehead. The profile on the right is brown with black hair and a blue earring. Between them is a white speech bubble containing a list of four communication principles. The background is a teal color with faint circular and leaf-like patterns.
- Simple
  - Credible
  - Consistent
  - Accurate information as soon as possible.