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■ THE PLAYER

Moss turns crisis control into a business opportunity

Background provided plenty of experience

By MERCEDES M. CARDONA

MOST CORPORATIONS WILL never have to face terrorist attacks or rumored infestations of giant crack-head rats. But if they do, Jeanine Moss says she can help them cope.

Ms. Moss and her former boss at interactive agency Organic, Nicole DeMeo, recently launched Turning Point Solutions, a firm specializing in planning and media training for companies that want to set up a crisis communications plan.

Turning Point will have offices in New York and San Francisco, where Ms. DeMeo ran her own firm, Bella Luna Communications, a specialist in new-company launches. Ms. DeMeo was formerly VP-managing director of the Organic Communications PR unit, and she hired Ms. Moss in 1999 as director of Organic Communications' New York office.

"This is a woman who had a phenomenal career experience, but no background on the Internet space. But we just hit it off," Ms. DeMeo said.

They stayed in touch after both left Organic, and began talking about



MOSS: Preparing for problems before they arise.

their start-up a year ago, when Ms. DeMeo suggested they pool her experience in new-company launches and Ms. Moss' background in crisis communications. The events of Sept.

Fast Facts

Name: Jeanine Moss

Age: 43

Now: Partner, Turning Point Solutions

Challenge: Prepare corporations and executives to handle crisis communications

11 and corporate scandals such as Enron Corp. and WorldCom have brought attention to the need for crisis communications, Ms. Moss said. She was most recently senior counselor for communications at the September 11th Fund, which oversees funds raised for aid victims of the World Trade Center attack.

Recruited in October 2001, shortly after the fund was established, Ms. Moss soon found herself fielding up to 100 media calls a day as the fund administered \$518 million in donations.

"I was extremely thankful they found me. Like every New Yorker, I wanted to do something," in the aftermath of the attacks, Ms. Moss said.

She had dealt with the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, as VP-marketing communications for the New York Convention and Visitors Bureau. The focus of the response to the '93 World Trade Center attack was on getting the word out quickly that New York was unscathed.

"There's a short period of time when the world is centered on you. It's an opportunity to let the world know what you need them to know," she said.

CRACK RATS?

Within days of arriving at the bureau, where she worked from '91 to '98, she was faced with her first crisis: a *New York Post* cover blaring "Crack Addicted Rats as Big As Cats Invade Manhattan." The story got picked up around the world, and threatened the city's tourism industry, but the bureau defused it by answering questions with humor, she said.

Quick response is the key to crisis communications, she said. Among Turning Point's services are planning and training workshops so companies will be ready to react. Its first clients include a gaming company preparing to go public, a software company considering suing a competitor over an intellectual property dispute and a restaurant company that wants to be ready if it ever faces a tainted-food case. ■