Crisis Communications: Being Prepared is Key

EXECUTIVE FARM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM JANUARY 30, 2019

What is Crisis Communications?



A crisis is a significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly, generally resulting in:

- ► Financial loss
- Reputation loss
- Public safety

Source: InstituteforPR.org/crisis managementandcommunications

Tylenol Crisis: The Media May Know Before You Do

Johnson & Johnson – Tylenol Crisis

Robert Andrews, J&J's Assistant PR Director recalled how "We got a call from a Chicago news reporter. He told us that the medical examiner there had just given a press conference - people were dying from poisoned Tylenol. He wanted our comment. As it was the first knowledge we had here in this department, we told him we knew nothing about it. In that first call we learned more from the reporter than he did from us." 5 dead after taking Tylenol capsules filled with cyanide

-PR Week, October 2015

"Chipotle Attempts to Recover From E-Coli PR Disaster: A Case Study" -Medium, August 3, 2017



"Troubled Chipotle Replaces Its C.E.O. Founder Steve Ells"

-New York Times, November 20, 2017



Are You Ready?

- Do you have a crisis communication plan?
- Is it updated annually?
- Do you have dedicated team members to handle crisis communications/risk management?
- Has anyone on your team received media training?

Let's Get Started

- What is included in a crisis communication plan?
 - Mission, Vision, Values, Purpose
 - Objectives and Strategies
 - Roles and Responsibilities
 - Activation Plan
 - Resource Inventory
 - Templates and Tools to get you Started

What Makes a Crisis Communications Plan Successful?

Prevention and Planning

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Agility and Responsiveness



Expertise/Resources

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Messages that reinforce and align your company's mission, vision, values and purpose

The Right Spokesperson(s)



Transparency and Accountability

Prevention and Planning Proactive Assessment



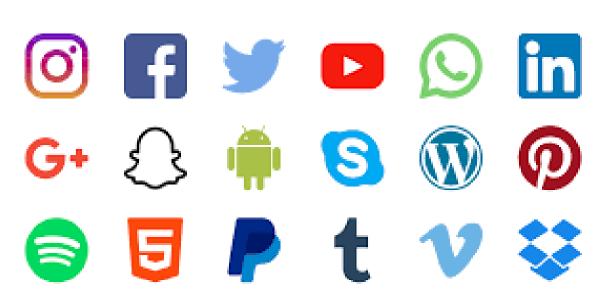
- Do your employees know your company's mission/purpose? Values?
- How would you define your culture?
 - Would your employees report things they see?
 - Do they feel safe speaking up?
 - Do they feel a sense of ownership in your company?
- What can go wrong?
- ► How likely will it happen?
- What damage can result?

Agility and Responsiveness

- Why is it important to be responsive during a crisis communication?
 - If you don't tell your story, someone will tell it for you
 - ▶ 24/7 real-time news cycle
 - Social Media Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snap Chat, LinkedIn and more
 - Online news channels

► Apps

Smart phones with cameras and videos



Expertise & Resources



- Do you have the resources and expertise to handle this crisis/issue internally?
- Do you need outside assistance? If so, do you know who to call?
- ▶ Who in your company is the expert on the matter at hand?
- Do you have your Mission, Vision and Values articulated? What is your brand promise?
- ▶ Who in your organization has experience talking to the media?

Messaging that aligns with your mission, vision, values and brand



Messaging that aligns with your mission, vision, values and brand Whose responsibility is the reputation of your company?

- It starts with leadership
- It is everyone's responsibility

As a leader, what can you do?

- Set a clear company mission, vision and values
- Create a culture of safety: are your employees willing to report things they see? Do they feel safe speaking up?
- Define and communicate stakeholder expectations

Choosing the Right Spokesperson

- Ideally, someone who has been trained as a spokesperson or who has had media training.
- Other questions to consider:
 - Is this person an expert on the matter?
 - Does this crisis require the head of the organization to respond or would it be better to have a subject-matter expert?
 - Can this person speak on behalf of our company?



Spokesperson Best Practices

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Tell your company's story in succinct sound bites



Make sure the spokesperson is fully briefed on three key messages and aware of the latest developments

Avoid using the phrase "no comment"



Avoid using jargon that the public will not understand



Have strong eye contact



Avoid saying "uhms" and be aware of other nervous gestures

Transparency and Accountability



Tell the truth like your reputation depends on it, because it does



Tell your story in a manner that is compelling and personal



Take accountability at the top of the organization

Preparing for an Unexpected Crisis



Choose to be Proactive vs. Reactive

The Secret to Successful Crisis Management in the 21st Century - Melissa Agnes TEDx Talk

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQGEPEaEWtg

Workshops

Questions?