

Crisis Communications: Preparation is Key

EXECUTIVE FARM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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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/crisismanagementandcommunications](https://www.instituteforpr.org/crisismanagementandcommunications)

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."

-PR Week, October 2015



An Unfolding Global Crises: Covid, War, Inflation

1. Covid
2. War in Ukraine
3. Inflation
4. Supply Chain

- ✓ Public Safety
- ✓ Financial Loss
- ✓ Reputation Loss



How are you managing the effects of COVID? Supply Chain? Inflation?

- ▶ Do you have an internal communication strategy?
- ▶ Are you able to reach employees, customers, strategic partners with updates and changes?
- ▶ Do you have dedicated team member to handle communications and/or operational risk?
- ▶ Do you have a plan to manage when when employee turnover or when employees are out sick?



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Part 1

Applying the Case Study

1. What crisis is the Brown Family facing?
2. How should they respond? Is not responding an option? Why or why not?
3. What questions could the media ask?
4. If they respond to the media, what should they include in their response? What should they NOT include?
5. What form of communication (spokesperson, statement, etc.) should they use?
6. What other concerns should they anticipate during a crisis?

Are you ready for a crisis?

- ▶ 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 Started



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What Makes a Crisis Communications Plan Successful?

1. Prevention and Planning

2. Agility and Responsiveness

3. Expertise/Resources

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

5. The Right Spokesperson(s)

6. Transparency and Accountability

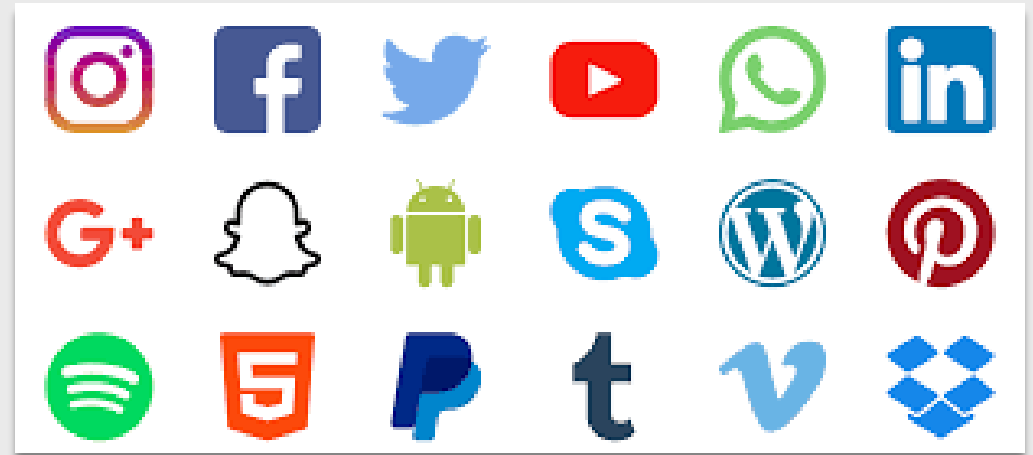
Prevention & Planning

- ▶ 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 & Responsiveness

- ▶ 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
 - ▶ Smart phones with cameras and videos
 - ▶ Apps



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 and reinforces your mission, vision, values and brand

Mission/Purpose:
why you exist

Vision: what you
are striving to
become

Values: behaviors
that will guide
you along the way

Brand: the sum
of who you are
and what you
stand for



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



Who is responsible for the company's reputation

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



As a leader, what can you do?

- Set a clear company mission, vision and values. Start with your *why*.
- 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



Tell your company's story in succinct sound bites



Make sure the spokesperson is fully briefed on your key messages and is 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

Take

Take a deep breath, step back and pause long enough to see the bigger picture and what is happening

Be

Be open to re-evaluating your plan when new info presents itself; praise the person who reports a mistake

Do

Do, monitor, diagnose, repeat

Avoid

Avoid silo-thinking: know something about everyone else's job, understand how various tasks fit together and how they fit into the big picture

What Not To Do.....

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=64647PQ7VSA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=64647PQ7VSA)



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Part 2

Apply the Case Study

- I. How do you currently educate/communicate/create meaning around your company's purpose/mission/vision/values/brand?
- II. Risk assessment: How do you identify risks in your organization? What can go wrong? What keeps you up at night? **List the top five areas of concern.**
- III. For each issue listed, determine how likely will it happen?
 - You may want to use a ranking system and have several key members score the likelihood. Ex: 1 - very unlikely, 2 - unlikely, 3 - possible, 4 - likely, 5 - very likely
 - For each issue, determine what damage could result.



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Anissa Davenport, Founder & Managing Partner

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Anissa has worked for more than 25 years in various business sectors focused on strategically growing businesses through branding, marketing, communications, innovation and customer experience. She has a unique ability to develop both strategic plans for growth, development and innovation while also focusing on pragmatic delivery of results and execution. She has a passion for coaching and developing others and maximizing the potential of organizations and is known for her contagious curiosity. As a coach and consultant, she has a passion for helping organizations and individuals unleash their potential and discover solutions that once seemed unreachable.

Roles:

Chief Strategic Development and Chief Marketing Officer for Vidant Health
President, Eye Integrated – marketing & web development firm
Account Executive, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, Hardee’s Food Systems

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Appendix

The Secret to Successful Crisis Management in the 21st Century

- Melissa Agnes TEDx Talk

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



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