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THE ULTIMATE DIGITAL PR CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

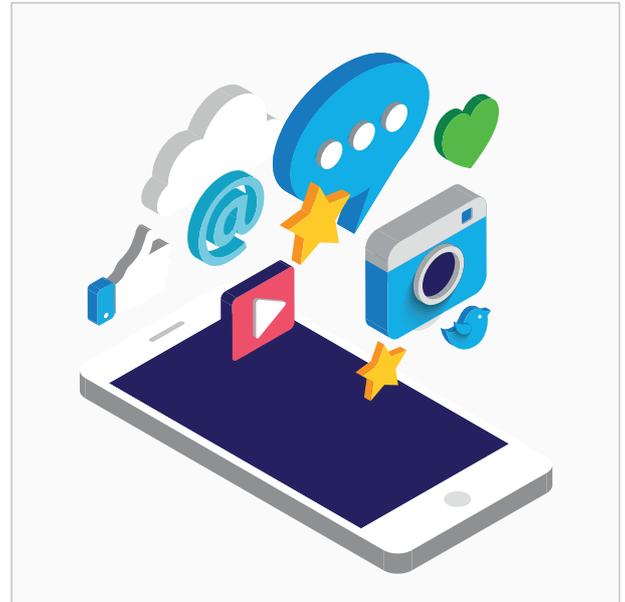


Why you need a Digital PR Crisis Communications Plan

Do you want to know how to put out a fire on a digital PR nightmare which ignites on social media?

Social media, community and digital marketing managers don't always come with a PR or journalistic background so it's important your management team meet to discuss the potential for any PR crisis that might erupt online.

Do you know what to do if a public relations crisis happens in your organization? No? Then you need a plan. Nobody or no company is immune from being parachuted into the media spotlight, whether it's of your doing or not.



Fail to prepare, prepare to fail, but not if you follow my best practice digital PR crisis communications strategy.

In business and in life your reputation is everything. It is in fact more valuable than money, because if you lose your good reputation, losing business will likely be the immediate impact.

“ *Being prepared for a digital PR crisis will help mitigate the damage to your brand, your business and your bottom line. So prioritize it as much as any other business function in your organization.*

From cyber-attacks to terrorism, cyberbullying and financial and political crashes – external factors are to a large extent beyond your control, however, how you react can give you some of that control back.

Internally, you should be able to define what possible threats pose damage to your organization and having a plan to deal with each gives you a head-start in any crisis, from announcing job losses, to white collar crime, workplace accident, technology failure or a product recall.

Establish the Possible Crises

In order to adequately prepare for a PR crisis in your organization you need to be able to establish the possible crises that may arise. Before writing your crisis communications plan you should craft, what I call, the Crisis Communications Probability Matrix ©.

The aim of this method is to give you foresight instead of waiting on a good crisis to give you hindsight. The adage, fail to prepare, prepare to fail is appropriate here.

THE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS PROBABILITY MATRIX © FORMULA:

- Establish examples of types of **crises** that may impact a private company or organization.
- Each crisis should be categorized by **type**, either as 'internal' or 'external' in order to help you craft your response. That's not to say there will be internal or external elements to a crisis but it's the starting point of the crisis we are establishing.
- Decide what **expertise** you will need for each particular crisis and remember that this may include outside expertise.
- Detail the **fallout** and impact of each possible crisis on your organization.
- Define who the crisis is going to impact most by listing the **audiences** in the firing line.

EXAMPLE:

CRISIS	TYPE	EXPERTISE	FALLOUT	AUDIENCE
WORKPLACE ACCIDENT	<i>Internal</i>	<i>CEO, Health & Safety officer, Head of Communications, external advisor</i>	<i>Death or serious injury, criminal or civil proceedings, dismissal, fines, reputation damage, negative online reviews, reduced public confidence, negative social media commentary</i>	<i>Staff member/s, family, colleagues, sister companies, shareholders, industry body, customers, suppliers, media, public</i>
CYBERATTACK	<i>External</i>	<i>CEO, CIO, IT, Department Head, Head of Communications, external advisor</i>	<i>Compromise private data, compromise IT systems, breakdown in internal and external communications, reputation damage, financial loss, share price fall, civil proceedings, negative online reviews, reduced public confidence, negative social media commentary</i>	<i>Staff, customers, industry body, suppliers, media, public</i>

15-Step PR Crisis Communications Plan

-  #1 ESTABLISH THE FACTS
-  #2 FOLLOW THE GOLDEN HOUR RULE
-  #3 ADDRESS THE ISSUE - 'NO COMMENT' IS NOT AN OPTION
-  #4 MONITOR YOUR BRAND ACROSS ALL MEDIA TYPES
-  #5 PREPARE YOUR STATEMENT
-  #6 BRIEF INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS FIRST
-  #7 ENGAGE WITH MEDIA
-  #8 HAVE ONE FACE AND ONE VOICE
-  #9 PREPARE THE NASTY QUESTIONS
-  #10 BE SOCIAL MEDIA READY
-  #11 TURN THE CRISIS INTO AN OPPORTUNITY
-  #12 SHIFT PUBLIC OPINION
-  #13 EVALUATE LESSONS LEARNED
-  #14 CONDUCT PR EVALUATION OF CRISIS
-  #15 PREPARE BESPOKE CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS SOP

Nobody or no company is immune from a PR crisis. We never know when we will directly or indirectly be involved in one. But what we can do is that we can plan for a PR crisis and be able to act strongly if and when it happens.

Have you got your PR crisis communications plan in place? If not, what are you waiting for? You are surely not going to wait for a crisis.



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Changing the world one message at a time

This e-book © has been produced by communications and social media author and expert, Joanne Sweeney-Burke.